MARCHMONT:

A NOVEL.

BY CHARLOTTE SMITH.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

London:

PRINTED BY AND FOR

SAMPSON LOW, BERWICK STREET, SOHO.

1796.

BRITISH MUSEUM

MARCHMONT.

CHAPTER I.

But who is ſhe in garb of miſery clad,
Yet of no vulgar mien?—a look ſo ſad
The mourning maniac wears—ſo wild, yet meek;
A beam of joy now wanders o'er her cheek,
The pale eye viſiting—but leaves it ſoon,
As fade the dewy glances of the moon
Upon ſome wandering cloud, while flow the ray
Retires, and leaves more dark the heaven's wide way!

"THIS poor young creature, Madam," ſaid Mrs. Moſely, "is a godchild of mine, as I told you. Her mother was a ſervant to Mrs. Marchmont, and

a great favourite of every body's—She married very well, the ſon of one of the richeſt farmers hereabouts, and they lived with the old people, where this poor girl was born. She was well brought up; but unfortunately her father and mother both died, and the grandfather met with heavy loſſes, and was grown very old, ſo that he could not carry on his buſineſs; and therefore was forced to give it up to another of his ſons, who was a hard, ſelfiſh kind of man, and did not much care to be burdened with Phœbe, though, while his father lived, he let her ſtay to take care of him.—He died at a great age about four years ago, and then Phœbe was deſired by her uncle to look out for a ſervice.—She was taken to ſerve two ſingle ladies who lived at Exeter, who, ſeeing her a ſenſible girl, uſed to make her read to them, and to work in the room with them; ſo that ſhe learned a little more than common ſervants generally do. Theſe ladies had

had a brother, who was captain of an India ſhip; and returning home from a voyage, he came down to ſee them. He had a ſervant, a young man who had been three voyages abroad, and ſaved a little money.—He fell in love with Phœbe; and as it was a very good match for her, the ladies did not oppoſe their being married, though they were very ſorry to part with her.—She went with her huſband, Mr. Prior, to London, being then a young creature not eighteen.—I don't underſtand how ſuch things happen, having known nothing about them when I was young, ſo that now I cannot make much out of what people tell me; but it ſomehow or other came to paſs that Mr. Prior, who had laid out the beſt part of his money in ſome goods from *Indie*, loſt them all by the wicked deceitfulneſs of a friend he had truſted—I heard that, by reaſon of their being ſmuggled, they were all ſeized by the Cuſtom-houſe officers—

and that ſo poor Prior loſt above four hundred pounds.—Well!—to make the beſt of it, and to begin the world, as it were, again, (his maſter, the captain, being gone back to ſea) he accepted of an offer that was made him to go out to the Weſt Indies to ſettle there as a ſort of ſteward, or overſeer of a gentleman's eſtate, and he had the liberty of taking his wife with him. So away they went to Jamaica about two years ago.—Poor Phœbe wrote to me juſt before they went away, and ſeemed in high ſpirits, ſaying that nobody ever was happier in a good huſband than ſhe was, and ſhe hoped to come back and ſee me one day or other, and all friends in England; but that ſhe did not mind leaving it with ſuch a kind and tender friend as her dear Prior was to her.—When they got there, poor young things! they found, to be ſure, all matters as good as they had been promiſed, as to profit and ſuch like; but Phœbe did

did not know how to uſe herſelf to live among the black people. She had no need, however, poor girl! to argue the matter long with herſelf; for before they had been at their new place ſix months, her huſband got the bad fever that they ſay ſo many hundreds have died of in thoſe parts. Poor Prior did not die, though. His wife, though ſhe was very near her time, nurſed him night and day, and he was young and ſtrong, ſo he did juſt get through it; but he was ſo weak and bad, that the doctors ſaid he never would be well if he ſtaid in that country—and his wife brought a dead child, and was very ill afterwards, ſo that they thought it beſt to come back to England.

"One would have hoped now that their troubles might have been ended, as much as poor folks troubles can end; but it pleaſed God to order it otherwiſe.

"They had a tedious voyage by reaſon of contrary winds, but they were within ſight of Engliſh ground; and poor Phœbe, when ſhe has been able to talk about it, has told me that the very ſight of the land did her huſband good, ſo that he was getting quite himſelf again for all their being ſo long at ſea.—Phœbe's few friends living here in the weſt country, ſhe wiſhed very much to have come to land at Plymouth: but her huſband's ſiſter lived in London; and he hoping to get ſome employment there, ſhe would not ſay any thing about it—ſo they went on in the ſhip that was loaded with ſugar and ſuch like for to ſell at London.

"But a terrible ſtorm overtook them a little above here; and not far from Sidmouth the ſhip was drove aſhore, and every body in her drowned, but two ſailors, a boy, and poor Phœbe, who having been ſtunned by the falling of one of the maſts as her huſband was trying

ing to take her out in his arms, was ſomehow entangled ſo among the rigging and ropes, that when the waves waſhed almoſt all the reſt of the people off the deck ſhe was left: ſo it was ſuppoſed, for nobody could tell exactly how it happened.—The laſt thing poor unhappy Phœbe remembers, when her diſturbed mind allows her to think of any thing, is, that Prior took her in his arms up from the cabin, and tried to cheer and encourage her; and when ſomebody adviſed him to ſave himſelf by leaping into the ſea, as he could ſwim very well, he anſwered, that he had rather periſh with his wife than get on ſhore without her; but that, if ſhe could but have courage, they might both be ſafe.—'At that moment,' ſays Phœbe, 'a great ſea broke over the ſhip; ſhe ſtruck with more force than ever; but Prior ſtill held me faſt, when on a ſudden there was a dreadful craſh, and a loud ſhriek followed—I remember no more.'——She

has told me though, ſometimes, when ſhe has had an interval of reaſon, that the firſt thing ſhe afterwards recollects was being on the beach of ſtones, ſurrounded by men and women, who, though they ſaw ſhe was not dead, were taking every thing from her, and that ſhe well remembers their cutting off her wedding ring becauſe her fingers were ſwelled.—The ſhock this gave her, and a ſort of confuſed idea of what had happened, and that Prior was perhaps alive, rouſed her to greater ſenſibility; but that the people continued to tear off her clothes, and one had juſt taken and run off with her pockets, in which was all the money Prior had received for his wages in Jamaica. She had then, ſhe ſays, ſtrength to raiſe herſelf up, and ſhe ſaw two of the men and one bad-looking woman whiſpering together, and is ſure they were conſulting together to kill her—when a young gentleman on horſeback came haſtily towards them, and, aſking ſome

queſtions,

queſtions, leaped down upon the ſtones all among the people that were round her, and inſiſted on their giving back the clothes they had taken from her, and affording her aſſiſtance to ſave her life, inſtead of thinking of robbing her.—The people only aſked what buſineſs it was of his, and went away to ſeek after more plunder, leaving her with very little clothes; and they ſeemed then very unwilling to go.—Phœbe ſpoke, and deſired the young gentleman to tell her where her huſband was?—He could not anſwer her; and it was with great difficulty he prevailed upon ſome other women, who were by this time come down to ſee what they could get too, to lead her among them to the neareſt houſe; where they would not take her in till he had given them all the money he had about him; and then he told the poor diſtracted creature he would go try to find her huſband!—Ah! he knew that would be to no purpoſe; for he was ſure he had

ſpoken to the only three people that, beſides Phœbe herſelf, were ſaved, and they had told him they ſaw Prior daſhed off the deck by the maſt, and were ſure he was killed.—But the dear, good young man fetched a ſurgeon to the poor diſtreſſed creature, who was a humane kind man, and by degrees they made her life ſecure; but as ſhe grew well enough to think, ſhe became more and more delirious.—They could not, you know, help her thinking, nor her knowing when ſhe did, that Prior was drowned; ſo ſhe was raving mad for a good while, and confined down in her bed.

"Ah! my deareſt Miſs, who do you think the noble-hearted gentleman was that ſaved this poor wretched girl?—It was no other but my dear young maſter himſelf—It was laſt October—juſt the firſt time he came down to this country to get out of the way—and he was overtaken by the ſtorm, and put up for the night

night at a little public-houſe on the way-ſide about two mile from the ſea.—The wind was ſo terribly high that he could not cloſe his eyes; and before daybreak he heard ſome men call up the landlord, and tell him there was a great ſhip aſhore at a place they named; and thereupon that man, and two or three more that came in, went away as faſt as they could to ſee for plunder. My good young maſter, on the contrary, got upon his horſe, and rode down to ſee who he could ſave.—Dear ſoul! he was always from a boy trying to do good to all the world!—I wonder when any body will think of ſerving him?

"God knows how ill he could afford the money it coſt him to have poor Phœbe taken care of. Finding ſhe was a native of this country, he enquired out her friends, and had her brought to one of them—that uncle of hers that lives in a lone farm about three miles off; and though he was in ſuch ſad diſtreſs himſelf,

Mr. Marchmont ſet about trying to recover for her ſome little matter that Prior had left in his ſiſter's hands when he went beyond ſea. But when that diſhoneſt perſon, this ſiſter of Prior's, found that her brother was drowned, and that his wife had loſt her ſenſes with grief, ſhe knew there was nobody that could maintain any demand againſt her; ſo nothing could be got from her but mere trifles from time to time—and the uncle was ſo unwilling to keep Phœbe, that he got her into a mad-houſe: but they preſently after diſcharged her, ſaying that ſhe never would be any better for any thing they could do for her. But, poor thing! ſhe hurts nobody, and all her raving is turned into a ſort of melancholy wildneſs that breaks one's heart. If it had not been for her having loſt her ſenſes, the ladies that ſhe lived with before ſhe was married would have taken her again, even although ſhe had not been able to do for them as a ſervant; but one

of thoſe ladies has very bad health, and is at times afflicted with low ſpirits herſelf, ſo that it was impoſſible for them to have ſuch a poor diſtracted girl in the houſe. But they were ſtill very charitable and kind to her; and they, and ſome of their friends, have agreed among them to pay every year as much as ſatisfies her uncle for letting her ſtay at his houſe. But, poor thing! they take no manner of care of her; and as ſhe is quite inoffenſive, nobody hinders her wandering about when ſhe becomes reſtleſs. But ſometimes ſhe ſhuts herſelf for ten or twelve days in her room, and never, if ſhe can help it, will ſee the light or ſpeak to any body. Now, ſince Spring is coming on, ſhe is, as the doctor ſaid ſhe would be, more affected.—One of the neighbours told me a few days ago, that poor Phœbe had taken to her rambling again.—Her mind runs upon the notion, that if ſhe goes to the ſea-ſide ſhe ſhall meet Prior—and when

that

that notion takes her, ſhe will ſit whole hours upon the rocks talking to herſelf, and ſometimes fancying he anſwers her: and once ſhe was loſt all night, and was found the evening of next day in one of the caverns down there by the ſhore, half dead with cold and hunger, and nearly inſenſible.—The cruel people ſhe lives with were mad with her for the trouble ſhe gave them, and uſed her ſo ill, that ſhe was much worſe for ſome time afterwards. One of the ladies that I ſpoke of before came to the farmer's houſe, however, and, I believe, promiſed him more money if he would treat this unhappy creature with leſs inhumanity—and about the ſame time his daughter, a ſad hard-hearted woman, was married, and he took a decent middle-aged perſon to keep his houſe—one that has ſeen trouble herſelf, and therefore knows a little more how to pity people that are unfortunate.—Still however it goes hard enough with poor Phœbe—for her uncle,

uncle, who is the moſt niggardly man in all this country, likes to make all he can of her, and to be at as little coſt about her as ever he can.—Poor ſoul! he has tried once or twice to make her work and help him one way or other in his buſineſs; but as for any out-door work, you ſee, Ma'am, what a ſlight creature it is; and when ſhe has ſat down to needle-work for a day or two, ſhe has ſoon flown off again, poor thing! and rambled down to the ſea, where ſhe ſometimes fancies the ſhips ſhe ſees at a diſtance are coming from Jamaica, and that Prior is in one of them. And when ſhe talks ſo, it is very ſad indeed to all that hear her, who have any feeling for her: but as to the people ſhe is with, they don't mind her, and are ſo uſed to hear her talk wildly, that they hardly heed her more than a dog or a cat about the houſe.—The worſt is of a ſtormy night—it is a difficult thing then to keep her quiet, becauſe the howling of the

the wind, and the beating of the rain, puts her in mind of the time ſhe was wrecked.—Sometimes ſhe walks about wringing her hands, and crying out to Prior, her dear Prior, to ſave her! and ſometimes ſhe wants to ruſh out of the houſe and go down to the beach—and ſhe entreats the people about her to go alſo, in order to ſave any poor creatures who may be ſhipwrecked—as Mr. Marchmont did ſave her from being killed by the cruel folks that waited upon the ſhore.—Ah! good God," continued Mrs. Moſely, her mind reverting at that moment to the firſt ſubject of her own concern, "Mr. Marchmont, far from being able to do ſo charitable an office, may now want ſomebody to help him in the ſame ſad condition!"

Althea had been too much affected by the preceding narration to be able to bear this cloſe with compoſure. Her eyes, that had been half obſcured with tears for the hopeleſs diſtreſſes of

Phœbe

Phœbe Prior, now ſtreamed afreſh, and ſobs which ſhe could not repreſs choaked her.—Poor Mrs. Moſely was frightened, and offered to adminiſter ſuch remedies as are uſual: but Althea, ſtruggling with the uſeleſs weakneſs ſhe had indulged, recovered herſelf in a few moments, and, deſiring Mrs. Moſely to keep poor Phœbe with her for a day or two, and inſiſting on her taking a guinea to anſwer any additional expence it might occaſion to her, ſaid, that ſhe would walk homeward, as it was already late.——And indeed tea always ſerving Mrs. Moſely for her dinner, Althea, deeply intereſted as ſhe was in the ſtory of the poor maniac, had forgotten the courſe of time, and that ſhe had not dined herſelf.

The evening was cloſing as ſhe walked home, and was even far advanced before ſhe was within ſight of Eaſtwoodleigh; for her languor prevented her walking

walking faſt, and many melancholy reflections ſat heavy on her ſpirits.—The new proof ſhe had ſo accidentally received of the active and humane ſpirit of Marchmont increaſed at once her eſteem and her regret; and Mrs. Moſely's laſt remark, that *he* might himſelf ſo ſoon want the pity he had ſhewn to others, had deeply affected her.—The thoughts of Althea, therefore, wandered between the poſſibility of doing ſomething to relieve the poor diſtreſſed victim of complicated miſery, whoſe ſtory ſhe had juſt heard, and the cruel parting of the preceding day.

Before her deliberate manner of walking brought her to within the two laſt encloſures towards the houſe, ſhe had calmed her ſpirits by reflecting, that for *her* to repine at preſent evils, which dwindled indeed into mere inconveniences when compared to the fate of Phœbe Prior, was a ſort of unthankful arrogance;

arrogance; and that of the future ſhe had no reaſon to deſpair, ſince, if virtue, integrity, and goodneſs, were the care of Heaven, its protection muſt ſurely be extended to Marchmont.

"I will not be ſo weak then," ſaid ſhe, reaſoning with herſelf, "as to give up my mind to deſpondence, which, while it will diſable me from aſſiſting others, will make me burdenſome to myſelf.—Marchmont, among real and heavy calamities, never loſt ſight of his benevolence; and ſhall I ſink in ſolitary and ſelfiſh grief, only from the apprehenſion of thoſe evils which never may arrive?—If every action of his gives me reaſon to be proud of the preference he avows for me, let me endeavour to become more worthy of that preference, which a feeble-minded woman cannot be.—Let me, who have no perſonal diſtreſſes to contend with that are not merely imaginary, alleviate the heavy

heavy afflictions of such an unhappy being as this poor girl; and I shall, when engaged in such offices, be able to say, "If Marchmont could know my employment, he would esteem me more."

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

. . . . . Far leſs abhorr'd than theſe
Vex'd Scylla, bathing in the ſea that parts
Calabria from the hoarſe Trinacrian ſhore.

LOST in reflection, the increaſing obſcurity of the evening, occaſioned by one of thoſe heavy fogs which the peaſants call a blight, increaſed, without Althea's remarking it, till ſhe could hardly diſcern the path ſhe was in. She quickened her pace, and looked about her with ſome degree of uneaſineſs. There was ſomething fearful in the ſtillneſs of the evening; for, unleſs it was the ſlow tread of the cattle ſhe heard grazing near her, not a ſound broke the air, except from a great diſtance the dull tinkling of a team

team with bells, neceſſary in narrow hollow ways, ſuch as are frequent in this part of England—How poor a ſubſtitute for the ſongſtreſs of the night, which is never heard in this weſtern country—

"With liquid notes to cloſe the eye of day!"

Amid this blank and ſullen ſtillneſs, which ſeemed like a general pauſe of nature, Althea at length reached the laſt field but one next the houſe, which appeared larger, and frowning in more ſublime ruin through the half-obſcuring miſt.

There was now only the laſt encloſure to paſs, which was divided from that part of the diſparked ground ſhe was actually in, by the group of old trees remarkable for having ſhaded the ſame ſpot when Edward Marchmont gave up near it the life ſo honourably paſſed and ſo early loſt.

There was ſomething very melancholy in the faint effort of incomplete vegetation

vegetation that appeared on the wild and moſs-grown branches that had puſhed out from their half-hollow trunks—it reminded Althea of the laſt ineffectual ſtruggles of their former unfortunate poſſeſſors to keep up an appearance of affluence when its reality exiſted no longer. She broke off as ſhe paſſed a ſmall branch of almoſt unfolded leaves from the old beech, to the twiſted bole of which the gate-poſt was fixed—(the aſhes and oaks had yet only a few weak buds)—and with many melancholy reflections opened the gate, and paſſed on; when ſuddenly from behind one of the trees ſtarted a ſturdy ragged man, who in a ſort of yell aſked, or rather demanded, her charity.

His unexpected appearance and rude vociferation almoſt deprived her of all preſence of mind. She continued, however, to walk quickly on, at the ſame time taking a ſhilling from her pocket, which ſhe gave the beggar, aſ-

ſuring

ſuring him, in a tremulous voice, that it was all the relief ſhe had in her power to afford him.—As this was a greater alms than is uſually beſtowed, and as ſhe was now within the court leading to Wansford's rooms, ſhe hoped immediately to eſcape from ſo alarming a follower; but the ruffian, now pretending to be as importunate with thanks as he had before been with prayers, purſued her cloſely to the door. Arriving at it, ſhe called to Mrs. Wansford to let her in (for, ſince the impudent intruſion of Vampyre, all the doors of the houſe had been kept ſhut). The door was opened: but her frightful perſecutor ſtill preſſed cloſe to her; and forcing a large ſtick between the door and door-poſt, before Mrs. Wansford could ſhut it, he halloo'd; his voice echoing like the Indian war-whoop round the ruined walls. Inſtantly four other figures as terrific as himſelf, though leſs ragged, appeared; and they all ruſhed together into

into Wansford's room, where ſtood Althea half dead with terror; while the children hearing their mother ſhriek, and ſeeing the fear Althea was in, clung ſcreaming round them both, crying in vain for their father.

Their father was not in the houſe; and the poor woman ſeemed to be ſo petrified with terror, that ſhe had no power to aſk the men their buſineſs. They did not, however, leave her long in ſuſpenſe: one of them, taking off his hat, diſcovered the diabolical countenance and diſtorted eyes of the villanous attorney, Vampyre.

He approached Althea in his uſual inſolent manner; and while ſhe ſhrunk trembling from him, as from the moſt noxious reptile, he told her in his loud, ſlow, and impudent manner, that he was now armed with proper authority to ſearch for "the young 'Squire, who had ſo long been playing at hide and ſeek with his clients—and that he hoped *ſhe*

had now no objection to his examining the houſe." —— Althea hearing this, felt a confuſed aſſemblage of ſatisfaction and indignation. Her courage, however, returned enough to ſay, "You ſeem likely to *rob* the houſe, and of your authority I believe nothing."

Mrs. Wansford, who really ſuppoſed from the appearance of the people that they were robbers and murderers, had no power to ſpeak, and turned her affrighted looks towards Althea, as if to entreat her not to irritate the ruffians, who now proceeded to demand of her the keys of all rooms. Keys ſhe aſſured them ſhe had none—and the attorney, brandiſhing the ſtick with which he guided his ſteps, declared that they could do very well without them, for that he ſhould make no ſcruple to break open the doors.—"And as for your hiding-places," ſaid the wretch, "with which this fine fellow has evaded the juſtice of the laws of this land, they will not

not ſerve him any longer; for here's an honeſt fellow," pointing to an ill-looking old man who ſtood near him, "that can give a pretty good account of them ſame rogues 'ſcaping-holes.—Yes, yes, I fancy we ſhall find the noble 'Squire this bout."

So ſaying, the gang departed together, and the inſolence of their principal directed them firſt into the parlour uſually inhabited by Althea—who remained trembling with indignation, not unmingled with terror, though ſhe rejoiced in the certainty that the perſecuted object of ſearch was far out of the reach of their malignity.

Neither Althea nor Mrs. Wansford had courage to ſpeak much to each other for ſome moments. At length the latter recovered her voice enough to attempt pacifying her children, who, though in whiſpers, ſtill expreſſed their fear as they hung round her.—"Ah! I wiſh your father *was* come in," ſaid

ſhe; "I'm ſure I cannot think where he is. But if he was here, what could he do—he's but one, and lame too—againſt all theſe fellows, as don't ſeem to mind how much miſchief they do no more than nothing? Perhaps, if he went for to contradict them, why they might do him a hurt, or that filthy old villain might take the law of him. — Hark! don't you hear what a noiſe they make?"—"What can they be doing?" ſaid Althea.—"I believe they are in our ſtore-room," replied Mrs. Wansford; "we've got no great matters, indeed, but I'm ſure they'll take what they can." Althea now recollected the door in that room, which led into the centre of the houſe, and from whence, if once they found it, they could deſcend to the place where Marchmont had been ſo long concealed, and where there was, probably, ſtill evidence enough of his having reſided there. —On ſuch a diſcovery it was impoſſible for

for Althea to reflect without apprehenſions; for though Marchmont was no longer liable to ſuffer from their abuſe of the laws of the beſt governed of all poſſible communities, yet Vampyre would obtain, from what he ſaw, the certain knowledge that Marchmont had been concealed in a houſe of which *ſhe* was the inhabitant. Such a circumſtance could in no light be ſeen without her dreading the blame that might be imputed to her, and from which ſhe had no means of clearing herſelf, ſince the truth could not in ſuch a caſe be explained. When to theſe reflections was added, her recollection of the ſtrange diſlike her father had always ſhewn to Marchmont, and when ſhe remembered that Vampyre was known to Sir Audley, and had been employed by him at leaſt once in his proceedings againſt the Marchmont family, ſhe could not do otherwiſe than dread the effect the diſcovery might have on her

future peace, and good underſtanding with her father.

Yet her generous unadulterated ſpirit felt againſt the malignant reptile, Vampyre, ſuch deteſtation and abhorrence, that evils, even greater than thoſe ſhe foreſaw, could not have tempted her to check the ſymptoms of the indignation his deteſted character and his preſent conduct excited; and for the firſt time in her life, her heart, good and gentle as it was, ſwelled with anger, mingled with ſomething like regret, that her feeble ſex denied her the privilege of chaſtiſing, as he deſerved, a monſter, who, diſgracing the name of man, ſeemed to be ſome ſubaltern agent of Mammon and Moloch let looſe to blaſt all on whom his *evil eyes* were turned, and commiſſioned to poiſon the happineſs and blaſt the hopes of youth and of honour.

Ah! little did ſhe *then* know the extent to which the laws of this country (by ſome breach ſurely in their conſtruction,

ſtruction, or ſome negligence in their adminiſtration) permit ſuch wretches to carry the moſt ruinous injuſtice, the moſt fatal oppreſſion!

As the helpleſs party below remained almoſt ſilent, and anxiouſly liſtening, they heard the gang of ruffians walking heavily through the great rooms, where the looſe boards and vacant walls re-echoed to their ſteps.

Althea, amid all her inquietude, reflected with exultation on the diſappointment of the miſcreant, Vampyre, who ſeemed ſure of now gratifying his odious thirſt of money and vengeance by dragging Marchmont from his concealment to a priſon.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock—Althea, afraid of leaving the little protection Mrs. Wansford afforded, remained with her and her children: that poor woman, to all the dread of having ſuch people in the houſe, now added apprehenſions for

for the ſafety of her huſband, who had not for ſome years ſtaid out till ſo late an hour—ſhe feared ſhe knew not what. Theſe frightful men looked very like aſſaſſins. It was the general report of the country, that Vampyre, who was known to have been guilty of almoſt every other crime, had been the ſuborner of murderers—why not the immediate director of them, if he could ſcreen himſelf from the vengeance of the law in *that* inſtance as he had done in *forgery* and *perjury?* Mrs. Wansford remembered with terror the rough manner in which her huſband had treated this noxious animal on his firſt impudent intruſion into their houſe; and ſhe trembled leſt revenge ſhould have actuated ſo unprincipled a wretch to do him ſome miſchief.

Nor was Althea, though ſhe did not imagine he could be guilty of ſuch atrocity, at all eaſier, when ſhe reflected on the extraordinary abſence of

of Wansford—and that, defenceleſs as they were, they had no means of haſtening the departure of the banditti, whoſe remaining the night there could not be thought of without terror.

The ſervant girl, who, though greatly alarmed, had at this moment the moſt recollection, reminded her miſtreſs how very ſtrange it was that the men ſhould be wandering about the houſe ſo long without light.—Some time after this remark, Althea was willing to flatter herſelf that theſe objects of her dread, wearied by their fruitleſs ſearch, had let themſelves out at the front door, and departed; but another moment, by attentively liſtening, ſhe was convinced they were ſtill in the houſe.—Hannah had now the courage to go out into the ruinous court that was between Wanſford's rooms and the fields. By getting up on a maſs of broken ſtones, ſhe could ſee many of the projecting windows of the north front of the houſe,

and ſhe ſoon came running in breathleſs to ſay that there was a light gliding from window to window.—Althea plainly ſaw by the girl's manner, that, added to her fears about the men, ſhe recollected the ſtories that belonged to the houſe, and ſuppoſed ſhe knew not what of imaginary horrors; for ſhe had not the courage to go out again, and looked paler than before ſhe had made this experiment; while Mrs. Wansford, liſtening with an aching heart for ſome ſignal that might announce her huſband's return, fancied ſhe heard moanings and complaints—and turned towards Althea looks ſo full of diſtreſs and terror, that her blood ran chill through her veins, and ſhe had never yet experienced ſenſations of vague dread ſo complicated and diſagreeable.

Another long half hour paſſed.—The clock ſtruck eleven; and the fears of Mrs. Wansford for her huſband's life became more inſupportable, while Althea

thea herſelf began to doubt whether ſomething terrible had not befallen him.—Liſtening in this cruel ſuſpenſe, they at length thought they heard the men coming down the ſtairs that led from the inhabited part above to that diviſion of the houſe at the termination of a long ſtone paſſage, in which on one ſide was the door to Althea's parlour, and quite at the end that of the room where they were. To the door of this laſt there was a piece of glaſs let in to give light to the paſſage, becauſe the great window on the other extremity had been boarded up to ſave the tax.—Hannah took courage to look through this glaſs. She ſaw the men at the other end of the paſſage. One of them had a ſmall lanthorn in his hand; the others ſtood round him as if in conſultation.—When ſhe reported this in a whiſper, Althea remarked that they had probably ſtruck a light.—"I fancy," ſaid ſhe,

" ſuch people do not uſually go on theſe expeditions without ſuch precautions, and I dare ſay they have alſo fire-arms."

This obſervation, though Althea was far from meaning to increaſe her apprehenſions, redoubled the agony of the poor woman, whoſe immediate fears of the ruffians now approaching them could hardly prevent her exclaiming with ſhrieks and cries that they had murdered her huſband.—Althea, who had reaſoned herſelf into more reſolution, now exerted herſelf to appeaſe apprehenſions ſo horrible — and repeated, that they were certainly only bailiffs coming as they did before to ſearch for Mr. Marchmont, and that they could have no deſign againſt Wansford.—" Ah, dear Miſs, why does not he return then?" cried the half-diſtracted woman. " He has never once ſtaid out in this manner before."—To this Althea had nothing immediately to reply: nor had

had ſhe indeed time, for the villanous group now entered the room; — and it was eaſy to ſee by their countenances that they had not found the prize they had taken ſo much trouble to ſecure.

A ſtout ill-looking fellow, on a ſign from Vampyre, approached the poor woman, and bellowed out — "Miſtreſs! you muſt take a little walk with us, and ſhew us a few more of the dog-holes about this d—n'd old place.—Come, come, good woman, you know where 'Squire *Skulk* is hid: we have a little buſineſs with him, and we don't go till we've ſpoke to his honour, d—n him." He then ſeized her roughly by the arm—and the poor woman and her children uttered a ſcream of terror; which was ſo far from making the brute deſiſt, that he was dragging her away with brutiſh glee, when Althea, rouſed by ſuch inhumanity, turned courageouſly towards Vampyre, and ſaid, "Thou wretch! who by an illegal

illegal act haſt brought theſe people here, at *your peril* ſuffer them to do the leaſt injury to any perſon in this houſe. Whoever you ſeek here (if you are authoriſed to ſeek any body, which I do not believe), you *can* have no right to aſſault Sir Audley Dacres's ſervant in his houſe—in *my* houſe."—Like the fiend whom he reſembled in malignity, the Satanic agent of abuſed law looked aſkaunce and ſomewhat confounded at Althea, who—"ſevere in youthful beauty"—thus checked his daring preſumption.—His followers, the cowardice of guilt ſtruggling with their accuſtomed habits of inſult and brutality, looked towards him for inſtructions whether to proceed or deſiſt.—The old monſter, with his uſual action of thumping his ſtick againſt the ground, came nearer to Althea, rightly imagining perhaps that nothing could be more terrific than a view of a face that was a libel on

the

the human countenance; and in his deteſtable ſonorous voice he began—

"Madam, I obſerve you take great intereſt in the concealment of this fugitive young fellow. Sir Audley Dacres, Baronet, your worthy father, who has been a client of mine, I having been recommended to him by the late Sir Ralph Gunſton, Knight and Baronet, my very good friend and client, who entruſted me with his very important affairs, on the occaſion of my being engaged for him in the celebrated conteſted election, at a certain time, againſt the Honourable John Anthony ——————"

He was proceeding thus, when the report of a piſtol without, yet very near the door, put a ſudden ſtop to his eloquence.

Mrs. Wansford now uttered another piercing ſhriek, having, as ſhe believed, a dreadful confirmation of all ſhe dreaded in regard to her huſband. Althea was ſo hurried by the various and fearful apprehenſions that aſſailed her,

her, as to be unable to fix on any. Little time, however, was allowed for conjecture; a violent blow againſt the outſide of the door almoſt ſhook it from its hinges—and in an inſtant five or ſix men, ſome armed with pitchforks and ſcythes, one with a piſtol, and another with a ruſty hanger, hurried into the room. Two of them ſupported Wansford, who, unable as he appeared to make any exertion, haſtened to diſengage himſelf from them, and, approaching Vampyre, took him by the collar, and, twiſting him round, gave him a kick, which ſent him haſtily to the door; whence a young labourer that ſtood near preſently ſent him, by the ſame method, with inconceivable velocity, into the yard; and in half a ſecond his ſatellites, ſturdy as they were, were obliged to obey the ſame ſort of impulſe, and found themſelves all without ſide the door, and at liberty to go to ſupper with "*what appetite they might.*"

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

D'où vien le Mal?

THE door was now ſtrongly barricaded within ſide, and Wansford, ſoon recovering himſelf, ſent his friends to procure for themſelves the refreſhments his wife was by the terror ſhe had undergone diſqualified to fetch for them. He then attended Althea to her room, where he briefly related to her, that, having gone, according to his weekly cuſtom, late in the afternoon to the Three Horſe-ſhoes, a ſmall ale-houſe and ſmith's ſhop, where letters and parcels were left, he had found drinking there a very

very creditable looking man, a ſtranger in thoſe parts, who ſaid he was on the road to ſee a nephew of his, who had married his daughter, and rented a large farm not far from Plymouth, where he was thriving apace.—He was a little tired, he ſaid, with his two days journey; for he had come the day before from beyond Ringwood in Hampſhire, and ſo thought to put up at the Three Horſe-ſhoes for the night. "A ſeemed a vaſt plauſible man," ſaid Wansford—"and a knew all the goings on in London, and concerning the war, and ſuch like; and me thought he was a ſenſible *diſſarning* ſort of a man; and I found a knew abundance of people about Hampſhire: and I, you know, Miſs, being a Hampſhire man, liked well enough to talk over the people we both knew in that country; for he might be for age, I thought, about my own ſtanding.—At firſt we had only a pint of cyder a-piece; but he ſaid he would not

not part with an old countryman ſo—we would have a tiff of punch—and he muſt needs treat me.—And ſo, my dear Madam———But what ſhall we ſay?—Every man may be overtaken ſometimes.—I'm not more like to be free from that there, you know, than another.—What was the upſhot?—Gads my life, if I don't believe though that the cheating ſly raſcal put *ſummot* in my drink, for after a little———and yet my head's as ſtrong as my neighbours———after a little, d'ye ſee, I becomed all of a ſudden as muzzled! as muzzled!——— and then the villain went away and left me—and when I woke, landlady told me what o'clock it was, and as how I had been faſt aſleep ever ſo long; but ſhe wa'n't willing, ſhe ſaid, to diſturb me.—Gads my life, I began to look ſharp—for, thinks I, may be this ſame ſly rogue, with his long ſtory, have ſtole my watch, and my money—though my money was not no great matters.

However,

However, they were both as ſafe as could be.—Eh! thinks I, what a devil did a mean?—and then I bethought me, that may be 'twas ſome trick of that ſon of Belzebub himſelf, Vampyre.—Ah! ha! thinks I, maſter of mine, be you thereabouts?—You're deviliſh cunning—but 'twon't do this time.—You muſt try again, old pettifog.—But I bethought me, Miſs, that I'd get two or three honeſt fellows to come home with me; which they were willing enough to leave their beds for to do, for they're all pretty keen upon the ſcent of that raſcally polecat of a lawyer.—So away we comes—and found the carrion crows ſure enough.—I believe they won't come again in a hurry.—Egad, they've had enough on't.—But if they've a mind to try again, why let 'um.—No harm done, you know," continued Wansford, winking ſignificantly at Althea—" no harm at all done—for the bird you know is flown, and I for my part"—

(and

(and he reached down an old muſket without a lock from the chimney rack) "for my part, if they do come—I'd no more mind ſhooting that old pillory-faced blood-hound through the head, than I would a mad dog—no, nor ſo much."

Althea now plainly perceived that Wansford had by no means recovered the effects of the ſtratagem that had been uſed to diſable him from returning home, and that he was in his own phraſe pot valiant. He was more likely therefore to increaſe than to appeaſe her anxiety, occaſioned by her deſire to know whether Vampyre and his ſatellites had explored the late concealment of Marchmont; and though ſhe trembled at the thoughts of being alone, ſhe found it neceſſary to diſengage herſelf from his loquacity, and to endeavour to calm her ſpirits, too much agitated by the circumſtances of the day and night. However her reaſon endeavoured to

combat ſuch an apprehenſion, ſhe could not help fearing that one of the ruffians might remain lurking in the houſe; and ſhe now thought herſelf more than ever unprotected, for Wansford was in no condition to hear or ſuccour her. Unable to contend with the terrors that poſſeſſed her, it was wiſer to yield to them, and ſhe therefore directed the ſervant girl to bring her bed and lay it on the floor in her room—where, after every ſearch had been made to aſſure them that they did not encloſe a foe, the door was faſtened, and Althea, envying the tranquillity of her companion, who was ſoon in a profound ſleep, endeavoured to obtain ſome repoſe.

To ſleep, however, was impoſſible till the morning, when the light that awakens the thoughtleſs and the happy to renew the labours or the pleaſures of the day, broke through the long caſement oppoſite the feet of her bed; and while

while it ſeemed to lend her ſecurity, her wearied ſpirits ſunk into forgetfulneſs.

But in a few hours ſhe awoke to the recollection of what had ſo much troubled her the preceding evening. The dread that Vampyre, having diſcovered the long inhabited retreat of Marchmont, would relate it to Sir Audley—the terrors of her father's anger appeared inſupportable—and they were aggravated by every diſtreſſing idea that her imagination could ſuggeſt. She was not yet of age, and was therefore wholly in Sir Audley's power. The ſteps he had already taken to induce her to conſent to give herſelf to Mohun, authoriſed her fear that he would not ſcruple to adopt others yet more harſh, to compel her to a meaſure he had ſo much at heart, eſpecially if he ſhould once believe that her obſtinate refuſal was ſupported by a predilection in favour of Marchmont, the man whom of all others Sir Audley ſeemed to hate.

To

To communicate theſe fears to Wanſford, as her reaſon for wiſhing to viſit the caverns of the houſe, was extremely diſagreeable to her—and to penetrate theſe melancholy receſſes alone was an undertaking to which her courage was not equal; yet to reſt in her preſent ſtate of anxiety ſeemed to be impoſſible.

Two days paſſed. Wansford, whenever he had an opportunity, continued, though he was become ſober, to menace the impudent intruders, and at length from threatening them with his own vengeance, he declared his reſolution to expoſe them to that of his maſter, Sir Audley, who would, he ſaid, certainly ſue lawyer Vampyre for a treſpaſs upon his premiſes. Althea, who had lately ſeen more of this man's propenſity to drink, and to prate when he had drank too much, than ſhe had ever before had an opportunity of obſerving, ſhrunk more than ever from giving him her confidence,

confidence, and not knowing what ſtep to take, ſhe took none; ſometimes tormenting herſelf with the fears of Sir Audley's knowledge of Marchmont's concealment, and at others flattering herſelf that Vampyre, diſappointed of his prey, would turn his attention to ſome more profitable victims than the unhappy family of Marchmont; and that, as none were likely to pay him for perſecuting *her*, ſhe ſhould never hear his deteſted name again.

Now therefore Althea endeavoured to reaſon herſelf into ſome degree of tranquillity, that ſhe might indulge that quiet melancholy, which, when ſhe parted with Marchmont, ſhe had looked forward to with a ſort of ſad reſignation not unmingled with pleaſure.

Spring was now ſo far advanced that the ſcene around her received all the advantages returning verdure could give it, but that ſcene was very far from inſpiring her with cheerful ideas. In the

uncultivated quarters of the great garden, a few ſhrubs, the nipped and half-vegetating ſucceſſors of thoſe that had ſhaded and adorned it in happier days, faintly flowered, while their ſtems were grey with moſs; and what verdure there was, was rather that of neglect than of culture. The female fern waved its feathery fans among the broken walls, covering them where the knotty and cankered arms of the old fruit-trees were nearly leafleſs. But theſe ruined buttreſſes and ſapleſs trunks afforded a convenient aſylum to a great number of birds, who were now building neſts, which Althea was very earneſt to ſave from the uſeleſs and wanton depredations of Wansford's children; inſiſting at the ſame time on his forbearing to ſhoot the birds themſelves, as he was, he ſaid, uſed to do—"for, plague upon them naſty tuoads! they eat up all his peaſon."

Althea now felt, what ſhe had never before allowed herſelf to be ſo much overcome

overcome by, that which it had been the principal purpoſe of her education to guard againſt, the wearineſs which ſuch total ſecluſion could hardly fail of bringing upon any one. During the winter ſhe had contended with it by perſuading herſelf that ſpring would allow her exerciſe, and bring cheerfulneſs, while it enlarged her purſuits; but ſince the terror ſhe had undergone from the pretended beggar, ſhe had no longer the courage to extend her walks beyond the walls that ſurrounded her gloomy reſidence; and within their deſerted area ſeemed to lurk the cruel images of ruin and deſolation, threatening to purſue through life the wretched wandering Marchmont, who, thus cut off as Althea was from every other ſociety, took more and more poſſeſſion of her imagination. Her thoughts were often turned towards his mother and his ſiſters. He had promiſed they ſhould write to her, but no intelligence

of them came. Not having yet recovered reſolution enough to go herſelf to Dame Moſely, ſhe was compelled to content herſelf by again ſending Hannah with an enquiry after the poor old woman and Phœbe Prior. The former anſwered by promiſing to come up to the great houſe the firſt day ſhe was able; Phœbe Prior ſhe ſaid was gone, and ſhe was afraid would ramble about again.

The generous heart of Althea throbbed with pity when ſhe thought of this hapleſs being, whoſe ſorrows ſhe could not even alleviate. Then ſhe returned to reflect on her own uneaſineſſes, and from thence on what would relieve her from them. Nothing could afford her the leaſt ſatisfaction but to hear of Marchmont; and when ſhe was likely to do that, ſhe had no means of calculation; for, when he had ſo earneſtly ſolicited permiſſion to write to her, he had never told her, and ſhe had no courage to aſk, from whence he propoſed to

ſend

ſend his firſt letter, or how he was likely to ſecure its conveyance to Mrs. Moſely, who was to deliver it —though, as the old woman had never mentioned or even hinted at it, ſhe doubted whether he had apprized her of his intentions. At all events, it would be yet ſome time before it was poſſible that ſhe could know whither his deſtiny had driven him.

It was now many weeks ſince Althea had heard of her father, and the laſt time was by a cold letter from Lady Dacres, merely informing her that Sir Audley had been confined by the gout, which diſabled him from writing. Since that, ſhe had written ſeveral times, with very earneſt enquiries, but had received no anſwer. However accuſtomed to endure neglect, it ſeemed very comfortleſs to be totally forgotten, even by her father, and abſolutely alone in the world, where there was not one being, except Marchmont, now ſepa-

rated from her very probably for ever, that ſeemed to take the leaſt intereſt in her exiſtence. Dreadful as was the idea of Sir Audley's diſcovering Marchmont's ſtrange concealment, and ſuſpecting her partiality towards him, there was ſomething more depreſſing in ſuſpecting that ſhe was abſolutely deſerted. She therefore wrote again to her father, who, at this ſeaſon of the year, was always in London. Time enough paſſed for her to receive an anſwer, but none came.

For Althea the world ſeemed no longer to be progreſſive. Without one proſpect for the future but what was overclouded with doubts, diſtreſſes, and difficulties which ſhe was afraid to inveſtigate; for the preſent buried alive, and cut off not only from general ſociety but from her own family, her ſpirits ſunk, and her mind, ſtrengthened as its natural ſolidity was by reaſon and reflection, became heavy and enervated.

She ſtill continued, mechanically, the charities and duties ſhe had undertaken, but the pleaſure that had at firſt attended their execution was gone. She did the little good that ſhe was able to do, from humanity and from habit; but that cheerfulneſs, the reſult of conſcious goodneſs, which ſhe uſed to feel, no longer diſſipated the heavy gloom that hung over her. Almoſt the only thing that now afforded her pleaſure was to liſten to the long, but to her attractive ſtories, which, when ſhe could ſee the poor old ſervant, ſhe encouraged her to tell, of what had formerly paſſed in the Marchmont family.

Many anecdotes, ſuch as garrulous old age loves to repeat, which would have appeared tedious and unintereſting had they related to any other perſons, Althea now ſat to hear, not only with patience but with pleaſure; for, though they all began with the honours of Marchmont's anceſtors, much of which

was adventitious, they generally ended in ſimple but affecting proofs of merit and goodneſs all his own. And ſtripped as he was of the decorations of fortune, nothing could have demanded ſuch a tribute of praiſe but a heart like that he poſſeſſed.

Althea, in theſe converſations, frequently attempted to form, from the accounts of Mrs. Moſely, ſome idea of the characters of his mother and his ſiſters. They ſeemed ſtrangely to have ſhrunk from her advances. Was it the dejection of ſorrow or the reſerve of mortified pride that had cauſed them to do ſo? This queſtion Althea continually aſked herſelf. She had no way of ſatisfying it, but by putting repeated queſtions to Mrs. Moſely, who, well as ſhe knew the parties, was but ill qualified to anſwer her directly. She had been ſo habituated to love her miſtreſs, that ſhe had no idea of the light ſhe appeared in to others—to her, ſhe always

ſeemed

ſeemed the beſt and moſt unfortunate of women. The three young ladies, ſhe ſaid, were very handſome—one of them was the very image of her brother. Althea thought that, whenever ſhe made an acquaintance with them, this would be her greateſt favourite.

On renewing on this interview with Mrs. Moſely her humane enquiry after Phœbe, the old woman told her, that the unhappy creature had left her.—"Two days after you, Madam, had ſeen her at my cot," ſaid ſhe, "her uncle ſent his dairy-woman to fetch her back; for the ladies who keep her had heard of her being wandering about, and were very angry. Alas a-day! the poor girl was ſadly unwilling to go; and when ſhe found ſhe muſt, ſhe would not ſpeak a word even to me—but looked ſo ſtrangely with her eyes!—I am afraid, indeed, it will not be long before ſhe breaks out again as bad as ever; and I do think that ſhe will come to ſome

untimely end, if ſhe is thwarted and vexed."

"Poor Phœbe!" thought Althea to herſelf, "for *thy* ſorrows there is no cure; there is not even any mitigation! After the loſs of ſuch a huſband, I hardly know if the loſs of reaſon be a misfortune!"

"How much happier mighteſt thou have been," continued Althea, ſtill indulging this train of reflection, "how much happier had thy poor Prior been, contented with the humble lot to which he was probably born!—Why did he, in ſearch of a higher fortune, go to thoſe climates where the ſoil, manured with blood, ſeems to produce only diſeaſe and death?"

Althea, as ſhe thus meditated, was walking homeward, attended by Hannah, for ſhe now never ventured alone. As it was noon and the ſun very hot, the girl undertook to ſhew her a way through a lane, which, though it led farther about, afforded more ſhelter from the heat. A very miſe-

rable

rable cabin, half formed of rock and roots to which it clung, in a hollow way, was within ſight of her path. Three half-naked, half-ſtarved children ran from it—one bearing in its feeble arms a famiſhed infant. They eagerly implored her charity; and Althea, ſtruck with a ſpectacle of diſtreſs which had never before croſſed her, enquired, while ſhe gave them all the ſmall money about her, to whom they belonged?—They were the children of a day labourer—their father had lately *gone for a ſoldier;* and their mother had been ill and confined to her bed ever ſince the birth of the youngeſt of the children; and they lived, if living it might be called, on a pariſh allowance, that did not afford them even bread!—Althea could not, on hearing this, content herſelf with tranſient charity. Though it was already later than the hour ſhe had ventured to remain out ſince her alarm, ſhe haſtened into the

cottage, or rather hovel; and the ſcene ſhe ſaw there penetrated her heart with ſenſations ſo painful, that ſhe had inſtantly recourſe to the means moſt likely to aſſiſt the objects whoſe condition had excited it.

Having given them ſuch immediate relief as was in her power, ſhe continued her walk, meditating on what ſhe could afterwards do for them, and on the ſtrange inequalities of fortune; her mind the more deeply impreſſed, perhaps, becauſe, ſince ſhe had been ſo much alone, and having for want of novelty been driven to a courſe of reading which ſhe had not entered upon before, ſhe had been reading Rouſſeau, and ſome other authors not uſually making part of the ſtudies of young women; and thus, the accidental circumſtance of being ſo long alone in a houſe like Eaſtwoodleigh, whither Mrs. Trevyllian's library (where there were more than mere books of amuſement) had been brought,

brought, had given her thoughts a direction which in the common intercourſe of the world they would perhaps never have taken.

'Gone for a ſoldier in mere deſpair, and to avoid the ſight of his family's miſery!'—"Good heaven!" ſaid Althea as ſhe repeated thus to herſelf what the poor woman had told her; "and is this the boaſted happineſs of our country? When I heard the ſad ſtory of Phœbe Prior, I lamented that her huſband had ever forſaken the laborious though peaceable life to which I imagined him to have been born, for the advantage offered him in another hemiſphere, where he muſt have executed a ſort of authority over thoſe human beings that Europeans make ſlaves, which ſeemed, to me, repugnant to all the honeſt principles of ſuch a man. But if ſcenes like *theſe* are to be found in the cabin of the induſtrious labourer, who can wonder that any man ſhould quit his

his paternal cottage?—or how can it be ſtrange that our peaſantry fly to America?—I have heard that all ideas of equality are viſionary — that they can never be realized—and I believe it. But ſurely, though there muſt be hewers of wood, and drawers of water, they ought to have the abſolute neceſſaries of life. It does not ſeem as if ſuch a family as I have juſt now ſeen can obtain them, even by the moſt unremitting labour of its principal."

This train of thought was not eaſily exchanged for any other. Althea could not help reflecting, how much difference to the poor of a neighbourhood the reſidence of ſuch a family as Marchmont's once was, muſt make.—"While *they* were here," ſaid ſhe, "I am ſure the voice of ſorrow, that they could relieve, was never heard. How much of evil the ruin of ſuch a houſe brings with it!—How ſad to think, that the friendly protection the members of this

this family lent to others, they now want for themſelves!"—Nor could other more general reflections eſcape her. "I have ſomewhere read," ſaid ſhe, "a calculation, that if only a third or a fourth of the ſums yearly raiſed from the people of one country, to annoy, by war, the people of another, were applied to the mitigation of the ſufferings of the aged and infant poor, every labouring man might then labour for the rich, yet poſſeſſing himſelf a certain degree of comfort; the country would become more populous, and of courſe more powerful to reſiſt all encroachment from nations leſs wiſe. Yet other ſage perſons in *their* works tell me, that the glory of this country is founded on its conqueſts. A plain underſtanding, however, naturally enquires why we ſhould deſire to conquer other countries when there is ſo much waſte land in our own? And ſurely a plain underſtanding cannot help regarding with aſtoniſhment

the infatuation of mankind, who, from habit and cuſtom (for it never can be the reſult of reaſon and choice), enter on a manner of life altogether unnatural, where more periſh by ſickneſs than by the ſword, as they are often tranſported, in floating priſons pregnant with infection and death, to another region of the globe, to kill if they can, or be killed by, men whoſe language they do not underſtand, whoſe country they have no deſire to poſſeſs, and with whom they cannot have the ſlighteſt cauſe of quarrel. Surely, of all the abſurdities that have been reduced to ſyſtem, this is one of the greateſt."

Ah! candid and unadulterated mind! you have learned early to reflect; but take care leſt this habit, hitherto ſo well applied, ſhould totally unfit you for ſociety. It will ſtrew thorns in your path, while other young women of your age ſeek only flowers.

By

By imagining yourſelf in the place of others, as you now continually do, you will learn to feel for all the unhappy, or even for thoſe who appear ſo; whereas it might ſave a great deal of (for the moſt part uſeleſs) pain, if you could contrive to feel only for yourſelf. Soon, very ſoon you are to enter into the world, where a young woman, who has refuſed ſuch an advancing and proſperous man as Mohun, only becauſe ſhe could not love him, to give her affections to a poor undone wanderer, like Marchmont, will be looked upon as one without common underſtanding, or perhaps as having loſt it by the ſtudy of romances; and of courſe you will be pointed out by the old as a warning, and willingly avoided by their daughters, as "a ſtrange young woman that nobody underſtands."

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

She heard the doleful tidings of his death,
And never ſmiled again!

THOUGH fatigued more than uſual by her walk, the ſpirits of Althea were too much affected to allow her to ſleep. She was not even diſpoſed to undreſs herſelf at the uſual hour, but ſat reading a periodical publication, which, after waiting for many days, Wansford had that evening got from the neareſt town.

To one ſo long ſecluded, moſt of the articles had the attraction of novelty. Her attention, however, was at length wearied. She put by the pamphlet, and began to unpin her clothes, when

ſhe

ſhe heard the clock below ſtrike twelve. Every thing was ſo perfectly ſilent, that an involuntary ſhudder came over her as ſhe repeated to herſelf

"'Tis now the very witching time of night
"When church-yards yawn!"

The ſtories ſhe had learned from Mrs. Moſely occurred to her; for that day the old woman had told her ſome ſhe had never heard before. Aſhamed, however, of vague fears, from which her good ſenſe revolted, Althea would have ſhaken them off—and hoping to loſe them in ſleep, ſhe haſtened to undreſs herſelf; when, approaching the table on which her glaſs ſtood to depoſit ſome part of her dreſs, ſhe again felt chilled by the profound and dead ſilence around her; while her ſingle candle, in a high, long, old-faſhion room, with a dark blue morine bed at the end of it, threw over her own figure, as ſhe ſaw it in the glaſs, a dim obſcurity.

"I look,"

"I look," ſaid ſhe, hardly truſting her eyes to ſurvey it, "ſurely I look like a ghoſt myſelf!"

Hardly had ſhe ſaid ſo, when ſhe heard, or fancied ſhe heard, footſteps in the paſſage: but ſo ſoftly and ſo lightly did they ſeem to fall, that the courſe of a dead leaf driven by the wind would have been almoſt as diſtinct. They died away at the other end of the paſſage.—Was it fancy?—Surely it could be nothing more. Althea liſtened, almoſt fearing to breathe, while the cold dew hung on her temples. The noiſe came again—a little louder than before—at her door it ceaſed, and ſhe fancied ſomebody breathed. Still arguing with herſelf that it could be nothing but imagination, ſhe almoſt acquired courage enough to open the door, and be ſatisfied; but as ſhe ſtood liſtening, and reaſoning herſelf up to this reſolution, a deep-drawn and broken ſigh was very evidently heard.—Althea recoiled,

coiled, and again waited in trembling expectation. The ſigh, or rather half-ſtifled groan, was twice more repeated, and then the light footſteps, fainter and fainter, ſeemed to depart from her door, till all was again as ſilent as death.

Some minutes elapſed before ſhe could move—ſo entirely had terror overcome her. The weak apprehenſions of ſupernatural agency which ſhe had indulged, now gave way to more ſubſtantial terrors; and the idea of Vampyre or ſome of his ſatellites was ſo preſent to her, that ſhe determined to ring a bell (which had been contrived near her bed to reach to the room where Wansford and his family ſlept). To this ſhe now applied herſelf: and it was not long before Wansford, with his wife trembling beſide him, appeared at the door; which, on hearing him ſpeak, Althea opened, and briefly explained the cauſe of her alarm.

Wansford,

Wansford, who often affected to be very ſtout-hearted, now turned pale, and trembled. While he knew Marchmont to be in the houſe, and that his ſervant uſed to leave it of a night to procure proviſions which were left at Mrs. Moſely's, he had always affected to treat his wife's fears, occaſioned by the noiſes ſhe heard, with great contempt. But now, that he knew that cauſe exiſted not, his old notions and prejudices were remembered; and as he was ſure that none of Vampyre's people could be about the houſe, and believed his young lady very unlikely to terrify herſelf for nothing, all the family of Marchmont ſeemed, to his frightened imagination, to have left their ſepulchres to wander round their old habitation.

When the queſtion followed from Althea of what was to be done, Wansford heſitated, and ſo plainly betrayed his apprehenſion, that as ſhe

was

was determined not to go to her bed till ſhe was aſſured no living being was about the houſe, ſhe acquired firmneſs enough to declare ſhe would accompany him on his ſearch, if he would make it. After ſuch a propoſal he could not refuſe; and they returned altogether to his room, where, arming himſelf with an old broad ſword which ſeemed to have ſerved in the civil wars, he marched with no very firm ſtep before Althea and his wife, who each held a candle in her hand.

In this order they deſcended the ſtairs into the room Wansford inhabited below. There was nothing to be ſeen but the old favourite cat watching among the wood embers for a few crickets, that had not yet betaken themſelves to the fields.

Wansford, though he looked paler and paler at every ſtep he took, proceeded to examine the place that ſerved them for a waſh-houſe; peeped into another

another in which was a ſafe; and having done ſo, he declared there was nothing to be ſeen. Althea's parlour and a ſort of ſtore room in the ſame paſſage were next examined. No unuſual circumſtance appeared; and then, as every part of this ſmall inhabited portion of the houſe below had been explored, it only remained to ſearch the ſtore room above: and indeed it was there that Althea's fears principally pointed—recollecting the ſecret avenue by which Marchmont had led her thither from the ruinous and deſerted buildings beyond.

Thither therefore they repaired—Althea by no means the moſt courageous of the party—but every thing remained there juſt as it had been left the night before. Wansford now aſſuming a little courage, ſtepped beyond a heap of malt that was ſpread near it, and tried the pannel that opened to give a ſecret paſſage to the body of the houſe. It was faſt; he had ſecured it himſelf ſome

days

days before with redoubled precaution; and he was convinced that no alteration had ſince been made in the faſtenings.

Nothing therefore reſulted from this ſearch, but a perſuaſion in the minds of thoſe who had made it, that either Althea muſt have been ſeized with ſome groundleſs panic, or that ſhe had been juſtly alarmed by a ſupernatural cauſe —and this laſt notion was to the feeble mind of Mrs. Wansford ſo pregnant with terror, that, forgetting her accuſtomed prudence, ſhe ſaid, "Ah, well,—this is ſomething more than common; I remember now what Dame Moſely told me only the laſt time we had any talk together."—"And what has ſhe told you?" enquired Althea with quickneſs.

"That always, before any of 'Squire Marchmont's family died, or any ill came to them, there was moanings heard about the houſe, and ſomething ſeemed to glide from room to room with deep

ſighs, and as it were warning them by melancholy noiſes....."

"And was any evil ever avoided by attending to the information of theſe warning ſpirits?" interrupted Althea, half peeviſhly.

"Not as I ever heard," replied the terrified woman. "But huſh! huſh! my dear young lady, ſure I heard it again?"

"No, no," ſaid Althea, "there is nothing—but do awaken Hannah, and let her bring her bed into my room, as ſhe did ſome nights ago. Though I believe it might, after all, be only the wind or rats, or my own fancy, yet my ſpirits are haraſſed, and I cannot remain alone."

Hannah, now rouſed from her ſound ſleep, was obliged to obey this order; and when the arrangement was ſettled according to the directions of Althea, ſhe went to her own bed and tried to compoſe herſelf to ſleep—but to ſleep was for her become more impoſſible than ever.—The ſuperſtitious legend in regard

regard to the Marchmont family, which Mrs. Wansford had ſo ſimply related, haunted her imagination, and gave her more laſting pain than ſhe had before felt tranſient terror.

It was in vain that all the arguments reaſon affords were brought forward againſt theſe impreſſions, which, if they are indulged, aggravate every preſent evil, but have never yet been found to ſave any one from thoſe which they are ſuppoſed to predict in future. The noiſe Althea was ſure ſhe had heard; and if it could not be accounted for by any probable ſuppoſition that it aroſe from a living being, it was difficult to combat the idea of ſome ſupernatural agency.

The morning found her dejected and weary. Want of reſt, and the ſtrange anxiety ſhe felt about Marchmont, gave her the look of a perſon that had juſt left a ſick bed. Sometimes ſhe thought of going to Mrs. Moſely's; yet the dread of converſation that would in-

creaſe inſtead of appeaſing her apprehenſions deterred her. However, as ſoon as ſhe could ſee Wansford, ſhe endeavoured to engage him to ſearch the uninhabited part of the houſe. But the man ſeemed to be ſtruck with terror, and, though he ridiculed all fear before, ſeemed to feel it now to a greater degree than thoſe had done at whom he had laughed for their abſurdity.

At length, however, Althea prevailed upon him to make an enquiry, without which ſhe found it impoſſible to ſleep in the houſe. But nothing could induce him to ſearch the ſubterraneous paſſages, all of which he was not ſure that he knew, unleſs he took ſome other perſon with him; and Althea was very unwilling that any other, unleſs it was his wife, ſhould be let into the ſecret, which probably they muſt diſcover, of Marchmont's late and long concealment there. Nor was it on other accounts deſirable that any of the neighbouring hinds ſhould be

be made acquainted with hiding-places which in the preſent ſtate of the houſe might be uſed for many bad purpoſes. It was determined then that Wansford and his wife ſhould go together on this exploit; while Althea, the maid, and Wansford's children, were to remain about the uninhabited rooms, ready to give the alarm, on the leaſt appearance of danger, to two labourers whom Wansford engaged, as if on his own account, to do an hour's work for him in his garden.

This party then ſet out about ſeven o'clock in the evening; the ſun was yet above the horizon, and ſhone bright.—Wansford aſcertained that the two labourers were near at hand; and then, Althea and the children accompanying them, he and his wife went to a place quite remote from that which Marchmont had ſhewn to Althea, and entered on his ſecret expedition with a candle in his hand, while ſhe walked backwards

and forwards in the great room, and the children ran about where they would, the ſervant girl following them.

Althea, now on the ſame ſpot where ſhe had firſt converſed with Marchmont, was loſt for a moment in the recollection of what he had then ſaid to her, when the voices of the children having ceaſed on a ſudden, ſhe was ſeized with the dread of being left alone, and went to the door that opened on the great ſtair-caſe to look for them. She called, but they did not anſwer her; and ſhe was haſtily paſſing acroſs the wide landing-place to follow them, when, caſting her eyes, not without ſome degree of undefined fear, towards the long and dark paſſage that led to the rooms ſo marked in the Marchmont family by misfortune, ſhe ſaw, as if coming from thence, a ſlender female figure that ſlowly approached, yet without ſeeming to look at her; while, riveted to the place, ſhe had no power to ſtir.—The ſpectre, for

ſuch

ſuch it ſeemed to be, ſtill came deliberately on, and appeared to be of air, for it was not heard to move. Althea, trembling like an aſpen-leaf, ſtepped back into the banqueting-room. The ſhape ſoon appeared at the door, with one finger held to its lips, as if to enjoin ſilence. It came quite up to her—it was poor Phœbe Prior!

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed Althea, relieved from a ſpecies of dread ſhe could not long have ſupported, "how came you here, Phœbe?"

"Softly, ſoftly, my dear young lady," ſaid ſhe in a whiſper, "I ſhall find him yet."

"Find whom?"

"Ah, Madam!" ſighed the poor lunatic girl, "don't ſpeak to me as if you too were angry with me. I think I ſhall find him; for this is the time and the place where he bade me look for him—it is his birth-day—the nineteenth of May! He never deceived me, and ſo I ſat up

all night waiting for the time. But if my uncle comes and finds me here! . . . . . You will not ſend for that hard-hearted man; *will* you, Ma'am? My good friend told me you would not; and ſee, Madam, what I have bought with the money you ſent me. I have wiſhed for it a great while. A boy picked it up at laſt, juſt by the ſad ſpot.—I never will part with it—no never."

The unhappy girl then ſhewed a perforated pebble, ſuch as are often found on the ſhore, through which ſhe had paſſed a blue ribband, and tied it upon her boſom. By her manner it ſeemed as if ſhe fancied it ſome trinket that belonged to her drowned huſband.

Weakened as the ſpirits of Althea had been before by watching and by terror, the piteous ſpectacle now before her affected her too much. Inſtead of being able to ſpeak ſoothingly to the wretched wanderer, the tears ſtreamed down her cheeks, and ſhe ſobbed audibly.

"Ah!"

"Ah!" cried Phœbe—"do you cry? you who are happy—and who have a lover faithful, and kind, and good, who adores the very ground you walk upon! He will come ſoon, and you will be married to him, and yet you cry!—while you never ſee *me* ſhed a tear—I who have loſt—Hah!—what?—what have I loſt?"

Althea, amazed by her ſtrange conjecture, terrified by the wildneſs of her looks, and imagining ſhe was about to be ſeized with a raving fit, ſtepped quickly forward, and called for Wansford; who now emerging from his ſearch, which had not been very long, appeared with his wife, and was of courſe much ſurpriſed by the ſight of Phœbe—though her appearance ſeemed to account for the noiſes that had occaſioned them ſo much trouble and apprehenſion.

Althea inſiſted on their treating her with gentleneſs; and as ſoon as ſhe had a little recovered from the extreme fear

ſhe had undergone, the poor girl, who ſo greatly excited her pity, became the object of her attention. It was neceſſary, however, rather to ſoothe, than to queſtion her as to the means by which ſhe got into the houſe, and concealed herſelf the preceding evening; for ſhe continued to be ſo wild and incoherent, ſtill talking of the nineteenth of May, and that ſhe was come to ſeek for her poor Harry, that nothing certain could be underſtood from her. Althea directed her to be taken care of till the morning, when ſhe hoped Mrs. Moſely might find the means to reaſon her into ſome degree of tranquillity.

Once more retired to her own parlour, Althea endeavoured to collect and compoſe her ſpirits; but ſhe had not been ſeated five minutes before Mrs. Wansford came in, in even greater emotion than when ſhe believed ſhe had to encounter a ghoſt, and delivered into

into Althea's hands a letter, which ſhe ſaid was juſt brought by a man on horſeback. The firſt thing that ſtruck Althea was, that it was from Marchmont; ſhe did not know the hand—and in ſuch confuſion that ſhe hardly comprehended them ſhe read theſe words:

"BATH, May 5th.

"MADAM,

"I am commanded by Sir Audley to inform you, that he is very ill at Bath; and my Lady not being well enough to accompany him at preſent, Sir Audley deſires that, upon the receipt hereof, you will be pleaſed to ſet out, with his ſervant James Eades to attend you, for Bath. Sir Audley has the gout in his hands, whereby he is prevented from writing. I am commanded to add, that James has directions for the journey, and that Mr. Wansford's wife may attend upon you,

for more ſafety, if you chooſe.—By Sir Audley's order, from, Madam,

"Your moſt dutiful ſervant
"to command,
"NATHANIEL WELSH."

A thouſand uneaſy and alarming ſenſations now beſet Althea. The firſt was, apprehenſions for the life of her father, who muſt be very ill thus to uſe another hand, and whoſe feelings towards her muſt be greatly changed. That Lady Dacres ſhould not, on ſuch an occaſion, attend him, ſeemed unaccountable; and that Sir Audley, if ſhe was too ill to be with him, ſhould think of his deſerted Althea, ſeemed very improbable, or at leaſt very remote from all that was likely to happen, according to the obſervations ſhe had formerly made. There was, however, very little time for conjectures or heſitation; for Wansford in a few moments followed his wife

to ſay, that Mr. Eades had deſired him to let Miſs Dacres know, that the poſt-chaiſe that was ordered from the town at ſeven miles diſtance, and which he had beſpoke as he paſſed through it, would probably ſoon be at the houſe.

"And do you know this James Eades, Wansford?" enquired Althea.

"Lord! Yes, Miſs.—Why, he is Sir Audley's head-groom, and have lived there, as near as I can gueſs, about five years.—Perhaps you would like to ſpeak to him?"

Althea directing the groom to be ſent to her, heard, with concern that abſorbed every conſideration for herſelf, that Sir Audley had been in what the man called "a poor way" for two or three months before he was ordered to Bath by his phyſicians; that he had been very unwilling to go, becauſe Lady Dacres was near lying-in, and in a bad ſtate of health, and one of the children, the third boy, one that they were

were both very fond of, had died of the meaſles, and the reſt had been very bad—ſo that ſickneſs and ſorrow ſeemed to have aſſailed the houſehold of Sir Audley in various forms. Nor was this all.—On making a few more enquiries, Althea learned that Mr. Dacres, the eldeſt of her half-brothers, who being taken from Weſtminſter School by the deſire of the maſters, was with ſo many precautions ſent to travel, had been not more than three months in Italy before he quitted his tutor, and was loſt for ſome time; till his want of money compelling him to apply to his father indirectly, it was diſcovered that he had returned to England, and concealed himſelf in a very diſcreditable neighbourhood, where he had ſold his watch and ſome other valuable trinkets, and from whence Sir Audley, with ſome difficulty, extricated him: after which his father was, however, reluctantly forced to conſent to his going into the Guards.

Guards. The battalion to which he belonged was ordered abroad; and the illneſs of both his parents ſeemed to have been in a great meaſure owing to the uneaſineſs his conduct firſt, and now the dangers to which he was expoſed, had given them.

The *truly* tender and affectionate heart of Althea bled to think what muſt have been her father's diſtreſs and anguiſh:—nor did ſhe fail to feel for Lady Dacres, who ſeemed to have laid up for herſelf a bitter ſtore of repentance, by her fooliſh indulgence to this unfortunate boy.—"And *this* young man," ſaid Althea, "is the pupil of modern education! raiſed in the lap of the moſt luxurious proſperity! *This* young man, who at ſeventeen appears to have run more than half way in the career of mature vice!——Ah! it was not thus that Marchmont is deſcribed at that age!—But Marchmont has been the child of adverſity!"

From

From this natural reflection her mind immediately returned to her father, whom ſhe now as anxiouſly wiſhed to ſee as ſhe had ever dreaded it. Nothing but the affectionate ardour with which ſhe deſired to diſcharge her filial duties could have induced her to ſet out at ſuch an hour, and ſo unprepared; but as the groom had ſtrongly repreſented Sir Audley's earneſtneſs to ſee her, and the danger he was in, ſhe determined not to loſe a moment more than was neceſſary to comfort Mrs. Wansford (whoſe ſervices on the road ſhe declined) for her departure, by aſſuring her it was probable ſhe ſhould ſoon return. She gave her ten guineas as a preſent from herſelf, promiſing to take the firſt opportunity of recommending her and her family to the favour of Sir Audley, that, if any new arrangements took place in regard to the old houſe, they might be preferred to ſome more comfortable ſituation.—

Then,

Then, her few clothes being packed up, ſhe got into the chaiſe, and, late as it was, determined to drive round to Mrs. Moſely's, at once to relieve herſelf from the anxiety ſhe ſhould have about Marchmont's letters, and to recommend to her care the unhappy Phœbe Prior; whom, as ſhe was now quiſe tranquil, and ſunk into almoſt ſpeechleſs ſtupor, Althea admitted into the chaiſe with her, that ſhe might be left with the only perſon that appeared to have much influence over her diſordered mind.

The grief and lamentations of the poor old woman, when ſhe learned that Althea was going, were very diſtreſſing to her. And indeed this was the only deprivation which ſhe could now feel: Althea ſeemed to her like a good angel, ſent with the laſt ray of light that was to fall on the dreary and comfortleſs cloſe of her latter days. This was now to diſappear.

Althea, affected by her ſorrow, with difficulty

difficulty prevailed upon her to liſten to what it was ſo material ſhe ſhould perfectly underſtand about Marchmont, and it was the moſt difficult taſk to her that ſhe could poſſibly undertake. Her purſe was almoſt emptied into Mrs. Moſely's hands, while, as the only condition annexed to the preſent, ſhe was enjoined to take care, as far as was poſſible, of poor Phœbe, and to let her remain at the cottage whenever ſhe was eaſier there—Althea promiſing at the ſame time to provide farther for the comfort of them both.

The moon affording light enough to prevent much danger from the very indifferent roads ſhe was to paſs before ſhe reached Exeter, Althea then ſtepped into the chaiſe, and between twelve and one o'clock, attended by her father's groom on horſeback, proceeded on her journey.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Thro' many a ſunleſs day and cheerleſs night
The unhappy lover, exiled from the light,
Each wild viciſſitude of paſſion proves,
Now ſinks in cold deſpair; now hopes, becauſe he loves.

THE ſolitary and agitated traveller, as ſhe journeyed by the light of the moon the firſt tedious ſtage, recalled the ſtrange circumſtances of the laſt twelve hours, as if ſhe had been endeavouring to remember and aſcertain the confuſed traces of a feveriſh dream.

Juſt before Wansford took leave of her he had called her aſide, and with a myſterious air had given her ſeveral letters,

letters, or papers which appeared to be ſuch.

"I found them," ſaid he, "down below in a little drawer under an old table, where our poor young gentleman uſed to eat his morſel!—You had better take them, Miſs."

Althea received them in ſilence, and now wiſhed to ſee what theſe papers were; but as ſhe did not get out at the two firſt poſt-houſes, the morning dawned before ſhe had an opportunity of gratifying her curioſity.

They contained detached ſentences of Italian and French poetry, expreſſive of his ſtate of mind, who had thus beguiled the hours of ſolitude and confinement by exerciſing his memory; for Althea recollected that Marchmont had told her he had no books, nor the means of getting any.

By his melancholy ruſh-light it was that he had written theſe—ſometimes to ſtrengthen his reſolution, at others to indulge

indulge the taſte and talents he had received from nature; for ſome were marked as quotations, while others ſeemed to be his own.

Althea fancied, as ſhe read them, that ſhe could diſtinguiſh the time when they were written; and the earlieſt appeared to have been recorded as incitements to that patience and fortitude which ſubſequent events had ſomewhat leſſened the power of exerting.—There were ſome lines from Metaſtaſio.——

"Combatti i rigori
Di ſorte inconſtante
In vario ſembiante
L'iſteſſa virtù."

On another paper a ſentence from Lord Bacon——

"Certainly virtue bears ſimilitude to ſome precious odours, which are moſt fragrant when incens'd or cruſh'd—for a proſperous fortune diſcovers men's vices, but an adverſe one their virtues."

And

And from ſome French author—

" Mais au moins de mon malheur je ſus tirer quelque avantage. J'appris à m'endurcir contre l'adverſité."

On another paper, which ſeemed to be more recently written, there were other quotations from different writers, mingled with comments of his own.

One of theſe texts was marked as being from Jean Baptiſte Rouſſeau, the Poet——

" Que n'ai-je pu, de vos plaiſirs épris,
Tendre Amiſié, dont je ſens tout le prix,
Dans une joie, et ſi douce et ſi pure,
Vivre oublié de toute la nature?"

And Marchmont had written under it—

" But *I* dare not aſpire to happineſs, leſt I ſhould involve others in my calamities. Oh, weakneſs! to indulge hopes that never muſt be realized! dreams of future pleaſure, which ſerve but to embitter

embitter the ſad realities that ſurround me waking!

"Yet ſuch viſionary hopes I have lately ſuffered to take poſſeſſion of my mind!

"Hopes of what? Ah! would I, if I *could*, unite the deſtiny of the woman I love with mine? Ought I?—who may ſay——

"..... forlorn I rove,
Without a crime, unjuſtly baniſhed*!"

But ſurely I might go on too with the ſtanzas that follow:

"Safe thy charms with me ſhould reſt,
Hither did thy pity ſend thee;
Pure the love that fills my breaſt,
From itſelf it would defend thee!

Ah! what Ills are mine to bear!
Life's fair morn with clouds o'ercaſting;

* Theſe and the following quatrains are in the poems publiſhed by Miſs Brooke, from the original Iriſh, a book not ſo much known as it deſerves to be.—Miſs Brooke is now dead.

Doom'd

Doom'd the victim of deſpair,
Youth's gay bloom pale ſorrow blaſting.

. . . . . .

Oh! thou dear hoard of treaſur'd love!
Tho' theſe fond arms ſhould ne'er poſſeſs thee,
Still this fond heart ſhall faithful prove,
And its laſt ſighs ſhall breathe to bleſs thee."

The paper on which the following lines were written was torn aſunder, as if he had meant to deſtroy it.

"If I linger here, ſhall I ever con-
"quer this unhappy paſſion? Do I not
"feed it by thus lurking within a few
"paces of its object? Yet whither fly?
"Amid the ſtillneſs of the night when
"I have left my cavern, and like a
"guilty wretch, lighter only in con-
"ſcience and in deſign, have ſtolen
"ſoftly to the door of the chamber where
"Althea, ſecure in native innocence,
"calmly ſlept—when I have indulged
"my fancy by believing I heard her
"breathe—when I have really heard
"her ſigh, and ſince our interview have

"dared

" dared to hope that the recollection of
" the unhappy Marchmont might ſome-
" times occaſion one of thoſe ſighs.—
" What have I done?—What? but ag-
" gravate certain and unavoidable ſuf-
" ferings, by thus ſeeking food for vi-
" ſionary indulgence; and having yield-
" ed to theſe mockeries of hope, have I
" not awakened under ten-fold anguiſh,
" when I have allowed reaſon to ſhew
" me *what I am*, and *muſt be?*

" Wayward as my deſtiny is, and
" while I ſee no means of eſcaping from
" it, ſhould I thus ſuffer my mind to
" become enervate? But it is in vain I
" know what I *ought* to do. One glimpſe
" of her I love, as ſhe walks ſlowly and
" penſively down the garden—as I catch
" a tranſient ſight of her among the old
" laburnums and larches that remain of
" the ſhrubbery—or even the echo of
" her light ſteps, as I liſten at the door
" which opens into the paſſage near her

"room; the diſtant ſound of her en-
"chanting voice, ſpeaking even to give
"a common order, all have their charms
"for me—ſuch charms, that I forget
"every thing but the pleaſure of being
"near her: and I form, in deſpite of
"reaſon, thoſe dreams of felicity, from
"which, when it regains its power, I
"relapſe into more acute pain."

"SONNET.

"Where with incumbent night the foreſts frown,
The care-worn pilgrim ſeeks his doubtful way;
Till weary on the graſs he throws him down,
To wait in broken ſleep the dawn of day.
Thro' boughs juſt waving in the ſilent air,
With pale capricious light the Summer Moon
Chequers his humid couch; while Fancy there,
That loves to wanton in the night's deep noon,
Calls, from the moſſy roots, and fountain's edge,
Ideal forms of Nymphs that haunt the ſhade,
And Naiads riſing from the whiſpering ſedge:
Then, 'mid the beauteous group, his dear-lov'd maid
Seems beckoning him with ſmiles to join the train . . .
Till, ſtarting from his dream—he feels his woes again."

Such

Such were ſome of the contents of the pacquet Althea peruſed. The effect they had upon her was that of heightening the tenderneſs, affection, and regret with which ſhe thought of Marchmont. The knowledge of his having watched near her room as ſhe ſlept—of having anxiouſly waited for a ſlight view of her as ſhe paſſed among the ſhrubs in the garden—and the ſtruggles he had evidently made to tear himſelf away, that he might not diſturb her peace by his unhappy love, gave her certain conviction of the ſincerity and the purity of his regard for her. But having for a while yielded to theſe reflections of mingled pain and pleaſure, ſhe recollected whither ſhe was going; and trembling leſt Sir Audley's knowledge of their attachment ſhould have been one cauſe of his ſending for her, whom he never ſeemed to wiſh near him on any former occaſion; Althea doubted whether, when with her father, ſhe ſhould be allowed the means

of hearing of her wandering and unhappy lover—whether ſhe ſhould ever ſee him more.

Almoſt overcome with anxiety and fatigue ſhe arrived at Bath. Welſh, her father's ſervant, who had been waiting for her arrival, came down to receive her; and informed her that Sir Audley had been ſo very ill the night before, that his life was thought to be in danger: the man added, that Sir Audley had been very impatient for her arrival, but his ſpirits were in ſuch a ſtate that it was neceſſary to let him know ſhe was in the houſe, ſome time before ſhe entered his room. Lady Dacres had been delivered of a ſon that had lived only a few hours; and Sir Audley, between his anxiety on her account, and ſome new vexation that had ariſen from the conduct of Mr. Dacres, had loſt all his firmneſs of mind, and fluctuated between peeviſhneſs and deſpondence, equally injurious to his health.

As

As ſoon as he knew Althea was arrived, he deſired to ſee her. She entered the room trembling ſo much, that it was with difficulty ſhe ſupported herſelf. But when ſhe beheld the very great alteration that had happened in the countenance and figure of her father, ſhe had need of all her reſolution to conceal how much ſhe was affected. His voice was as much changed as his perſon:—feeble and tremulous like that of a very old perſon, it ſeemed to fail alike from weakneſs as emotion, as, drawing his daughter gently towards him, he ſaid—

"Althea, my poor girl! are you willing to be my nurſe a little while? I may not want your attendance long. They tell me I am better—I hope I am. It will do me good to have you near me."

He appeared to recollect how little he had deſerved the tenderneſs he now ſolicited from his long-neglected Althea, whoſe looks and broken accents ſuffi-

ciently evinced how affectionately her heart anſwered this return of regard, and with how much ſweetneſs and duty ſhe was diſpoſed to repay it.

When Sir Audley became more compoſed, he ſaid, "You have heard, Althea, of what has happened? My family afflictions have been heavy. Lady Dacres is hardly now, I fear, out of danger. I wiſh I were well enough to begin my journey to London—it is dreadful to be abſent at ſuch a time!"

Althea now exerted herſelf to perſuade Sir Audley that the beſt thing he could do would be to compoſe his ſpirits, which would more than any thing haſten his recovery. She aſſured him, that if her unremitting attention could aſſiſt in the leaſt degree that deſirable end, ſhe ſhould be happier than ſhe had ever been before. Her voice failed her as ſhe would have gone on; and her father, who ſeemed to underſtand her ſenſations, while he tried to repreſs his own,

ſaid,

ſaid, "You are a dear good girl, Althea."—They both ſeemed to think it was better to put an end to the converſation.

Althea from that evening entered on a new taſk, attendance in the ſick room of her father, where ſhe acquitted herſelf ſo much to his ſatisfaction, that it became to her a ſource of the moſt heartfelt ſatisfaction; while Sir Audley felt like an indigent man who had ſuddenly diſcovered a mine of gold on his ground that he never dreamed of poſſeſſing:—he was, however, unwilling to expreſs his preſent ſentiments, leſt they ſhould ſeem too ſtrongly to reproach him with his former harſhneſs and neglect.

In being aſſured, as ſhe ſoon was, that Sir Audley knew nothing of what had paſſed in regard to Marchmont, a heavy weight was taken from the mind of his daughter. The greater part of every day was paſſed either in writing

letters for him on buſineſs; letters to his wife, with accounts of his health; or in reading political tracts, all on the ſide of the queſtion to which he was attached—and Sir Audley was thoroughly a courtier. Blind ſervility, wilful miſrepreſentation, or the rhodomontade of declamation, of which moſt of theſe party pamphlets conſiſted, made them alike diſguſting to her reaſon and her taſte; but ſhe would have executed the taſk, which often continued through great part of the night, with more cheerfulneſs, had ſhe not obſerved, as ſhe waded through theſe tinſel or fulſome pages with the moſt patient aſſiduity, that, ill as Sir Audley was, his mind was ſtill agitated by views that were likely ſo ſoon to vaniſh in that awful futurity, on the brink of which he ſeemed to be trembling—and that at every interval of eaſe he returned to the ſanguine contemplation of projects which death would probably prevent his ever

ever executing. Then, having wearied and exhauſted his ſpirits, ſhe ſaw him ſuddenly ſink in mental and bodily anguiſh; and recollecting the helpleſs family he had to leave, of whom his eldeſt ſon ſo little promiſed to be a protector, he felt all the futility of the plans he had been forming for *himſelf*, and hardly dared think of the reverſe that might befall *them*.

In all the converſations he had yet held with Althea, Sir Audley had evaded ſpeaking much or ſeriouſly of Mr. Dacres; but ſhe ſaw that he was almoſt always the firſt ſubject of his thoughts. What ſhe conſidered ſtill more extraordinary was, that her father had never mentioned Mohun to her, and ſeemed to have forgotten, or to wiſh to forget, all that had formerly paſſed about him.—Althea, who never thought of him without ſhuddering, conſidered this ſilence on the part of her father as the moſt certain indication of a change

in his diſpoſition in her favour; and when he appeared to gain upon his diſorder, and there were ſymptoms of his conquering it, ſhe ventured to encourage hopes that ſhe might be reſtored to his tenderneſs, and taken into his paternal protection, without being compelled to ſacrifice, for thoſe advantages, all the happineſs and quiet of her future life.

But though Mohun ſeemed to be out of the queſtion, there was no reaſon to believe that, to Sir Audley, Marchmont could ever become acceptable; and when her thoughts were turned towards him, which always happened the moment ſhe was alone, ſhe was ſometimes compelled to divert them from the painful enquiry of what would be the event of an attachment that had now gained an unconquerable power over her heart—and at other times ſhe perſuaded herſelf to believe, that if his merit ſhould procure him a marriage with

with ſome woman of fortune, who might relieve him from all his embarraſſments, ſhe ſhould herſelf rejoice at it; though, certain that it was impoſſible to find a man, in her opinion, of equal merit, ſhe ſhould never marry herſelf.—If the future, however, looked comfortleſs, the preſent was wrapped in more diſquieting obſcurity; it was now ſix weeks ſince Marchmont had taken leave of her.—What was become of him? whither was he gone?—Never, perhaps, might they meet again!

Days and weeks paſſed on—Sir Audley made but little progreſs towards his recovery, a fortnight after Althea's arrival, and his phyſicians ſeemed to doubt whether he would derive any farther benefit from the Bath waters: they rather recommended his returning to London, becauſe his abſence from his family ſeemed to prey upon his mind. It was ſettled then that he ſhould undertake the journey:—Althea heard

with mingled concern and ſatisfaction, that he had determined ſhe ſhould accompany him.

Nothing could be more repugnant to her than going to reſide with Lady Dacres, whoſe temper would probably be irritated by ſickneſs and diſappointment, and certainly would not be ſweetened when ſhe ſhould witneſs the newly-reſtored affection of her huſband to his eldeſt daughter. In removing ſo far from Eaſtwoodleigh, the probability of hearing of Marchmont would be leſſened, and the means of hearing rendered more difficult. If her father died, ſhe ſhould be left, perhaps, wholly in Lady Dacres's power: if he recovered, ſhe might again become a ſource of uneaſineſs between them.

But, eaſily melted by the kindneſs ſhe had been but little accuſtomed to, the delight ſhe felt in being uſeful to her father, in poſſeſſing the power to ſooth his pains, and to render tolerable the

the confinement of a ſick room, which it was likely he might long be deſtined to undergo, counterbalanced, in the mind of Althea, all the reaſons of her diſlike—and ſhe thought, that if ſhe contributed to the re-eſtabliſhment of a health ſo neceſſary to her family, Lady Dacres would not ſcruple to own her obligations to her, and loſe the paltry jealouſy ſhe had before ſhewn, in the purſuit of their common intereſt in her father's life.

By being in town, Althea thought ſhe might obtain an opportunity of ſeeing Mrs. Marchmont and her daughters who reſided near it; and with this contrariety of ſenſation, all, however, occaſionally abſorbed in ſolicitude for her father, ſhe began her journey.

Sir Audley bearing the fatigue better than they had reaſon to expect, he deſired they might proceed to Newbury, as the nearer he approached to London the greater became his anxiety to get thither.

thither.—Althea ſaw, with ſatisfaction, that he appeared not likely to ſuffer from the journey, as ſhe had feared: he inſiſted on her leaving him for the night at an earlier hour than ſhe had been accuſtomed to do, and bleſſed her as he bade her good night.

Althea retired to her bed, and had enjoyed, for two or three hours, undiſturbed repoſe, when ſhe was ſuddenly ſtartled by a noiſe at her door. Some perſon rapped at it violently, but ſeemed unable to articulate more than—"Madam! Miſs Dacres—Oh! for God's ſake, get up."—She aroſe in terror, aſking in vain who was there, while ſhe haſtily put on her clothes. The voice had ceaſed, and the perſon ſeemed to be gone from thence; but others were heard running about the houſe. The idea of fire was the firſt that occurred to Althea, and her firſt impulſe was to run towards her father's room, though ſhe was not ſure ſhe could find it. In a moment

moment ſhe was dreſſed; and taking the candle that was in the room, ſhe hurried, with trembling ſtep, along a ſort of open gallery: at the top of the ſtairs ſhe met Welſh;—he was pale, his lips quivered, and his knees ſeemed to refuſe to ſupport him.

"What is the matter, Welſh?" exclaimed Althea.

"Ah! Madam, my maſter!"

"What of your maſter?—is he ill?"

"Indeed, Madam, he is very ill—ſo ill, that——"

Althea, without ſpeaking, was running towards the room.—Welſh took her arm, and the miſtreſs of the inn, who at that moment came up to them, ſaid—"You had better tell the young lady the truth:—it is in vain to attempt deceiving her."

"The truth?" cried Althea.—"Gracious God!—my father is dead then?"

"We are afraid ſo, Madam," ſaid Welſh.

"Who

"Who is with him?—who is with him?" aſked ſhe impatiently—"I will ſee him."

"It is very uſeleſs, Sir," ſaid Mrs. ******, "to let the lady have the ſhock of going into the room—I have left it ſince you have—Sir Audley is certainly dead. You had better go to his room," added ſhe, ſpeaking to Welſh, "I will take care of Miſs Dacres. Come, Madam, let me lead you back to your chamber."

Althea was ſo ſtunned by a blow thus unexpected, that ſhe became giddy and ſick, and, leaning on the arm of the perſon who offered her aſſiſtance, was led back to the room ſhe had left. She ſhed no tear, nor uttered a ſingle word. It ſeemed as if ſhe was arguing with herſelf as to the reality of what had juſt paſſed, and then, as having ſome hope ſhe might be deceived, ſuddenly roſe, and ſaid ſhe muſt go to her father's room. She was, however, again prevented;

vented; and in a moment afterwards a medical man, who had been ſent for to Sir Audley, came to her. He talked very rationally; deſired ſhe would go to bed and take ſomething to calm her ſpirits; and aſſured her, that to her father ſhe could not now be of uſe, unleſs it were in ſo far commanding herſelf as to give the neceſſary orders.—To theſe, however, Althea, notwithſtanding all attempts to collect ſome degree of fortitude, was wholly unequal. She beſought the gentleman to ſpare her, by taking upon himſelf the direction of every thing; and then, that ſhe might prevail on the well-meaning but officious people about her to leave her alone, ſhe conſented to go to bed.

Mrs. Trevyllian, among the various excellent leſſons ſhe had given her beloved Althea, had inculcated none with more frequency and earneſtneſs than the neceſſity of preſence of mind and fortitude.

fortitude. In a moment that brought to her recollection all the anguiſh ſhe had ſuffered for the loſs of her firſt and beſt friend, the maxims ſhe had taught forcibly recurred to her, and there was now occaſion for her to practiſe them. Cold and even unfeeling as had been the conduct of Lady Dacres, the good heart of Althea bled, when ſhe thought of the ſorrow that would overwhelm her when ſhe knew that her children had no longer a father—and the ſtate of health in which ſhe was repreſented to be, added to the poignant concern with which Althea conſidered the ſituation of her ſtep-mother. How to mitigate, as much as ſhe could, the violence of the firſt ſhock, was now to be conſidered—and to determine on ſomething was immediately neceſſary, leſt the fatal news ſhould reach Lady Dacres without any precaution at all.

Inſtead therefore of indulging that depreſſion of ſpirit which would have deprived

deprived her of the power of being uſeful, Althea, after remaining alone about an hour, ſent for the miſtreſs of the houſe; and, as ſhe could not herſelf ſee Sir Audley's ſervant (who ſhe deſired would on no account quit the remains of his maſter), left an order with her that he ſhould put down the names of the friends moſt intimate in her father's family, and of the phyſician who uſually attended Lady Dacres.

The name of the confidential friend was Mohun.—To him Althea could not reſolve to ſend, but determined, by a letter, to inform Dr. B. of what had happened, and to entreat he would go himſelf to diſcloſe the melancholy intelligence to Lady Dacres.—This letter was immediately written, and ſent off expreſs—and Althea, having ſo far executed her duty, began to conſider, in this great and material change in the family, what was to become of herſelf.

There

There was no reaſon to believe that the heart of Lady Dacres was ſoftened towards her; and ſhe had often had occaſion to remark, in late converſations with her father, that he ſeemed diſtreſſed when it was neceſſary to ſpeak of her future reſidence with them, as if he were afraid of promiſing too much as to her reception. Now that her father was no more, it was very uncertain whether her mother-in-law would receive her at all, or whether it was right to put her reluctant complaiſance to the trial: yet had Althea no other connection on earth, nor any friend whoſe protection ſhe could claim. To Eaſtwoodleigh, indeed, ſhe might ſtill return: yet it was poſſible that even that melancholy aſylum might be after a time denied her, ſince Lady Dacres had often ſaid, that it was folly in Sir Audley to keep the houſe in its preſent ſtate, though it would be a ſtill greater

to

to attempt repairing it; and that the only wiſe way of getting rid of ſuch an incumbrance would be to pull it down, and ſell the materials, ſince there were farm-houſes enough upon the eſtate.

It was therefore probable that, ſuch being Lady Dacres's ſentiments, ſhe would ſoon diſmiſs the ſervants, and raze the houſe.

Althea, thus compelled to think of her future deſtiny, foreſaw, not without ſome diſmay, that the hour was now at hand, when, totally alone in the world, and ſlenderly, very ſlenderly provided for, ſhe ſhould, perhaps, have cauſe to regret even the lonely ſeclusion of Eaſt-woodleigh, and poſſibly to wonder how ſhe could ever have been unhappy, when ſhe enjoyed, however remotely, the protection of a father.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

"There is nothing ſo affecting as the dignified fortitude of a family, who, fallen into indigence, have recourſe for independence to virtuous induſtry."

AT an earlier hour than Althea expected, the phyſician, to whom ſhe had written, arrived himſelf; he came poſt, and ſaid that it was Lady Dacres's requeſt that Miſs Dacres would return with him to London, after he had given all the neceſſary orders for conveying the remains of Sir Audley to Capelſtoke.—Althea enquired, with tender earneſtneſs, after Lady Dacres, and was conſoled to hear that ſhe was tolerably compoſed. Eager to do every thing

that

that might contribute to eaſe the mind of one who had been dear to her father, ſhe haſtened to obey the ſummons thus ſent her; and flattered herſelf that, ſince all jealouſy of her favour with Sir Audley muſt now be at an end, his widow would forget every former prejudice againſt her, and admit her to ſhare the cares that would attend the education of the younger part of his family, to whoſe ſervice ſhe propoſed, with the trueſt filial affection towards his memory, to devote herſelf.

At the end of her melancholy journey, which was ſoon performed, Althea found herſelf under the roof ſo lately her father's, with very different ſenſations from thoſe with which ſhe had left it to attend on her aunt. Indeed the houſe was in every reſpect changed.—The ſervants, who were then noiſy, inſolent, and preſumptuous, now glided about like ſpectres; and a mournful ſilence reigned where lately the continual

tinual entrance of company, and ſometimes the ſame ſort of buſtle that is ſeen at a ſtateſman's levée, uſed to diſturb the ſtreet. Lady Dacres ſent her woman, with an excuſe to Althea for not ſeeing her, even on the morning of the third day after her arrival. It was not difficult for her to believe, that their meeting might affect her too much; but ſhe could not help thinking it ſtrange that her ſiſters had never appeared.—At length, however, theſe young ladies, after ſending a formal notice of their intentions, came to her apartment. The eldeſt, now about ſixteen, *ſeemed* to wipe her eyes; but her demeanour, which was extremely cold and reſerved, gave no encouragement to the ſenſible heart of Althea to conſider her as a ſiſter, or as one deeply intereſted in their recent loſs. The other two were ſtill under the direction of a very formal governeſs, who entered with them, and ſat perpendicular as a ſtatue by them, while

while Althea endeavoured to make out ſomething like affectionate converſation, which, however, ended only in "Yes," or "No!" on their parts. Then, after remaining under this reſtraint for a quarter of an hour, the elder ſiſter aroſe, and took as ceremonious a leave as if it had been of a perfect ſtranger, and the governeſs, with her two bridling pupils, departed in great form at the ſame time.

This was too much for poor Althea, who, forlorn as her ſituation at Eaſtwoodleigh had been, never felt herſelf ſo totally alone in the world as at this moment. Her heart ſunk in cold and blank deſpondence when ſhe conſidered, that it was uncertain whether the univerſe contained one human being that cared whether ſhe exiſted or no! To write to Mrs. Marchmont ſhe had not yet reſolution, nor was it indeed quite proper ſo immediately after her father's death. Living alone in her room, ſhe

ſaw none but ſervants, who ſeemed hardly to conſider her as a part of the family. On the fifth day, however, a ſtranger deſired admittance. It was the attorney employed by Sir Audley in his affairs. This man, who ſeemed to be very well convinced of his own importance, informed her, after a preface which contained a panegyric on Lady Dacres, that he was directed by her Ladyſhip to wait on Miſs Dacres to read to her the will of the late Sir Audley, her father. Althea, totally ignorant of the forms uſually obſerved in ſuch caſes, and who had hardly yet thought of the diſpoſition of her father's effects, aſſented to what Mr. Grimworth propoſed; who thereupon, in a ridiculous tone, began to read a ſcroll he held; by which Althea preſently underſtood that all her expectations of any increaſe of fortune from Sir Audley's paternal affection were at an end.

The two thouſand pounds ſettled upon her

her on her mother's marriage, and hardly a thouſand left her by her aunt, was all ſhe was ever likely to poſſeſs: of the latter ſhe became miſtreſs on attaining the age of twenty-one; the larger ſum was in truſt, and the intereſt only was to be paid her; the truſtees in whoſe names it ſtood being directed in the will to ſee it ſettled on her whenever ſhe married; which, in another paſſage, it was enjoined her not to do without the conſent of Lady Dacres—to whom was given every power that her huſband, Sir Audley, could beſtow upon her: and the perſonals of every kind were hers, except a diamond croſs which had belonged to the mother of Althea, and which was now directed to be given her, with a ring, and ſome articles of inferior value. Lady Dacres and Mr. Mohun were executors.

To all this Althea, whatever ſhe thought, had nothing to ſay in the preſence of the conſequential perſon who

made the communication. As ſoon as he took his leave, her preſent circumſtances, and future proſpects, forcibly took poſſeſſion of her mind: the contemplation was not flattering, yet ſhe felt no inclination to blame her father.—The will was made almoſt immediately after the death of Mrs. Trevyllian, when her father's diſpoſition towards her was certainly much leſs affectionate than it had been towards the end of his life. Yet, had he then made another will, to do much in favour of Althea could not have been in his power; for the far greater part of his fortune had belonged to his ſecond wife, who had taken care that no part of it ſhould be alienated.—From her, if any judgement was to be formed from her preſent conduct, Althea had nothing to expect; and the idea of continuing in the protection of, and in ſome meaſure dependent on, a perſon who ſeemed to be little diſpoſed to treat her with that affection which ſprings from

from the heart, was, of all the uneaſineſs ſhe had yet felt, the moſt difficult to endure with fortitude.

Lady Dacres, like all thoſe who feel very keenly for their perſonal convenience, lamented her huſband, becauſe much of her conſequence, and no inconſiderable part of their income, was loſt with him; but ſhe was incapable of really loving any body but herſelf, and her children becauſe they *were* hers.—Yet conſcious, perhaps, how little of real tenderneſs and regret was in her heart, ſhe obſerved the moſt minute gradations in the *forms* of grief. Althea was, after ſome days, admitted to ſee her in her half-darkened apartment; but a very few words paſſed between them, and thoſe few were ſo coldly delivered, that Althea relinquiſhed at once every hope that remained of finding a real friend in the widow of her father.

The truth was, that Lady Dacres, under the firſt ſurpriſe and concern on

the unexpected death of her husband, had consented to the proposal of Dr. B***, who was, at that moment, her adviser, and who justly remarked, that decency and affection demanded that Sir Audley's daughter should, at such a time, find protection with the rest of his family. But no sooner had the first tumult of her spirits subsided, than she saw innumerable objections to Althea's residing with her, the chief of which was the expence, though a consideration that had *almost* as much weight, was the fear (hardly acknowledged even to herself) of this step-daughter's eclipsing her own—for, with all her ridiculous partiality, she was compelled internally to acknowledge the personal loveliness of Althea; though of the mind that animated her face, and gave it its peculiar charms, Lady Dacres was wholly insensible.

Could this narrow-minded woman have contrived to have placed the daugh-

ter

ter of her huſband as the ſuperintendant of her nurſery, and to have kept her in a ſtate of abject dependence, ſhe would willingly have preferred her to the people ſhe now employed: but the ſmall independence Althea poſſeſſed, and the proper pride which ſhe had often ſhewn, precluded every attempt of that ſort; and if ſhe ſtaid at all with her mother-in-law, it could only be as Miſs Dacres.

Time, however, ſlowly moved on; a ſhort conference every day at dinner and tea with Lady Dacres, or a ſilent airing with the children and their prim governeſs, were the only periods at which Althea left the ſolitude of her own room. When ſhe was admitted to that where the afflicted widow ſhut herſelf up, their converſation was languid, and, on the part of Lady Dacres, under viſible reſtraint.—Althea was too delicate to ſpeak on what was, however, uppermoſt in her thoughts, nor had ſhe indeed any thing to propoſe: the ob-

ſervation of every day ſtrengthened the ſuppoſition that ſhe was not a welcome viſitor where ſhe was—yet, whither could ſhe go?—where find a proper aſylum?—Frequently were her thoughts turned towards Mrs. Marchmont and her daughters; and ſhe ſometimes believed that they might gladly receive her as a boarder, becauſe what ſhe ſhould pay would probably be of great uſe to them: but how could ſhe propoſe this, or how make farther advances towards the acquaintance of a family who had ſo ſtrangely appeared to recede from thoſe ſhe had made already?

It was now two months ſince the departure of Marchmont—and in all that time he would ſurely have commenced the correſpondence he had ſo earneſtly ſolicited, had not ſome new calamity put it out of his power. Perhaps he no longer exiſted:—this dreadful idea ſometimes forced itſelf on the mind of

Althea,

Althea, but ſhe repelled it as reſolutely as ſhe could: it was too terrible to be endured.

The gay crowds that ſo lately inhabited that part of the town had now diſappeared, and hardly a ſtraggling coach paſſed through the deſerted ſtreets. Nothing could be more oppreſſive to the ſpirits than the appearance of every thing around her. The windows of the oppoſite houſes were half ſhut, and the idle ſolitary ſervants ſtood loitering away their afternoons at the doors.—Here and there were ſeen a group of unemployed chairmen, whoſe hoarſe voices, and the cries of the fruit-venders, were all the ſounds heard amidſt the ſullen deſertion of the hot and duſty ſtreets.

Such was the comfortleſs ſituation of Althea, who continually thought of ſeeking Mrs. Marchmont, without being able to determine on it.—At length ſhe reſolved to write to her—and, waving

every other conſideration, to think of her only as the mother of Marchmont, and one whoſe misfortunes it might be poſſible for her to alleviate.

A piece of information ſhe learned the day ſhe had made this reſolution quickened its execution.

Lady Dacres ſent an excuſe for not receiving her as uſual—illneſs was the reaſon given, as had ſometimes happened before. The governeſs, Mrs. Bentham, and the young ladies, however, aſſembled as uſual; and it happened that the former was ſomewhat more communicative than uſual, and from her Althea learned that Lady Dacres, unable to viſit Capelſtoke this ſummer on account of the ſtate of her ſpirits, had thoughts of going to Margate—and Althea diſcovered that it was intended ſhe ſhould perceive, by the hints Mrs. Bentham dropped, that the great expence, on account of her having ſo large a family to remove, had deterred

terred her from yet beginning a journey which was thought to be neceſſary to her health. It was not difficult to perceive that Lady Dacres wiſhed for an opportunity of ſhaking her off, and thought this removal offered one.—There was therefore no time to heſitate; and Althea wrote the letter ſhe had meditated to Mrs. Marchmont, who now, as ſhe believed, reſided at Fulham. It contained merely a requeſt of leave to wait upon her; and, though with great reluctance, ſhe determined not to ſpeak to Lady Dacres of quitting her till ſhe received Mrs. Marchmont's anſwer, or even to delay it till ſhe had viſited her, and was enabled to judge whether ſhe could hope to find, in the mother of Marchmont, the maternal friendſhip which was become ſo neceſſary in her deſolate and unprotected ſituation.—In the interim, whenever ſhe ſaw Lady Dacres, the converſation was invariably turned to the ſubject of

œconomy. Sir Audley had poſſeſſed a conſiderable ſinecure, and participated *en croupe* a very large ſhare of a place which his intereſt procured for one of his friends. The loſs of theſe emoluments Lady Dacres failed not to lament, with as many remarks on her extreme ill fortune as if ſhe had nothing left. Althea indeed ſometimes thought that, in deploring this diminution of income, ſhe forgot the huſband through whoſe means ſhe had enjoyed it.

Avarice was always the leading feature in the character of Lady Dacres; and it is a fault which always increaſes with years: but with her it had acquired ſtrength from another circumſtance, which Althea now diſcovered—the exceſſive extravagance of her eldeſt ſon, now Sir Gunſton Dacres, whom, during his father's life, ſhe had privately ſupplied with money, and for whom her ill-judged fondneſs now urged her to amaſs it for his future aggrandiſement

and

and gratification, even at the expence of her other children.

Althea, convinced of this, ſaw an additional reaſon for believing, that ſhe ſhould not long be a gueſt with whom Lady Dacres would conſtrain herſelf to keep up even the forms of kindneſs.

Uncertain how to act in a ſituation ſo diſtreſſing, and uncertain whither to go, the three days, during which ſhe expected the anſwer from Mrs. Marchmont, ſeemed the longeſt and moſt painful ſhe had ever yet paſſed. At length a letter was brought to her: ſhe opened it trembling: ſcarce could the writing of Marchmont himſelf have affected her more than did this, which ſhe believed to be from his mother.—The handwriting was remarkably elegant, yet free, and without any of the formality which is hardly to be avoided in elaborate fine writing.—The letter follows——

"Madam,

"MADAM,

"You will, I hope, allow me, in the abſence of my mother, to thank you for your moſt obliging letter; yet indeed, deareſt Madam, I never found myſelf ſo much at a loſs. I would fain expreſs all I feel of gratitude for repeated kindneſs, to which I am ſure we muſt ſeem to have very little claim; for how ſtrange muſt our conduct have appeared to you! I dare not trouble you with a long explanation in writing; but, if I am ſo happy as to ſee you, I will endeavour to convince you that it has been from the moſt laudable motives that my poor mother has denied herſelf the gratification of becoming known to you.—Ah! Madam, we account ourſelves *ſo* unhappy, that we are afraid leſt the *infection* of our diſtreſs ſhould injure thoſe who have not thrown us off; and, alas! they are *ſo* few!—Yet to the very ſmall number of benevolent

nevolent and feeling minds, who are affected by our ſituation without the power of relieving us, my mother has been afraid of adding Miſs Dacres; and this, with ſome other reaſons which I am ſure you would not condemn, have together prevented her from availing herſelf of the generous attempts you have made to give us, what we have heard enough of you to make us highly value, the honour and pleaſure of your acquaintance.

"But ſurely, under our preſent circumſtances, it is no time to deny ourſelves the little good that Heaven ſeems to offer us. I believe, Madam, that if I am ſo fortunate as to ſee you, I ſhould find myſelf utterly unable to ſpeak all I have to ſay; I hope, therefore, there will be no impropriety in writing. There are, perhaps, forms which ought to be obſerved, yet I cannot but believe that Miſs Dacres will forgive me if I break through them.

"Indeed

"Indeed our ſtruggle, with ſome remains of pride, is ſo ineffectual, that we ſhould long ſince have given it up, had not my mother ſtill lingered in the hope that her own family would render the ſtep unneceſſary, which they were too proud to allow her to take as *their* relation. She has a ſiſter, Lady Silcheſter, who, ever ſince our fortunes have been ſo deplorably changed, has endeavoured to eſcape from the relationſhip; but, as it is too well known, ſhe has at laſt declared, that if my mother *does* go into buſineſs, ſhe will aſſiſt her upon no other terms than her changing her name. While my brother was in England, he poſitively refuſed to conſent to this; nor could he indeed bear to think that his mother and his ſiſters ſhould engage in a manner of life, of which the pride of a very ancient family has, perhaps, given him, and all of us, falſe ideas. His objections, and the languid

deſpondence

deſpondence of my dear mother, have deterred my ſiſters and myſelf from the undertaking, rather than the ſelfiſh arrogance of Lady Silcheſter. But as we are convinced ſhe never will effectually befriend us, nor indeed can we well endure to be under obligations to her, (which we ſhould be made to feel more heavily than any other ſtate of dependence) we have at length prevailed on my mother to allow us to try what we can do, to procure for her and for ourſelves a ſubſiſtence, which ſurely is not diſhonourable. Her tenderneſs, however, will not permit only us to appear in this, as we were deſirous of doing; ſhe thinks we are too young, and that the intention, which ought to command reſpect, will not always ſecure us from the malice of the cenſorious, or the impertinence of the profligate. She therefore ſacrifices her own feelings to give us the protection of her appearance in

our

our little ſhop, and, with my eldeſt ſiſter, is gone down to Margate to begin on this mode of life. A change of air, and particularly to the ſea air, we hope will be of great uſe to her health, which is often in a ſtate that makes us tremble for her life—and where ſhe is not known, the new taſk, undertaken on motives ſo laudable, will, we truſt, affect her leſs. I ſtay here for about ten days longer with my younger ſiſter, till we can finiſh ſome of the articles which are to become part of our ſtock in trade, and we are then to follow her.—And can you, Madam, will you condeſcend to viſit us?—I hardly dare hope it!——Yet when I reflect on your character, ſuch as it has been repreſented to me, I cannot but flatter myſelf you will give me an opportunity of expreſſing the gratitude which we owe you, and accounting for the apparent inſenſibility of hearts, which indeed, deareſt

Madam,

Madam, are all as conſcious of their obligations, as is that of

"Your moſt obedient and
"Faithful humble ſervant,
"LUCY MARCHMONT.

"I would do myſelf the honour of waiting on you, but I cannot leave my youngeſt ſiſter; and to be ingenuous, the expence, ſmall as it is, would be ſome object to us juſt now."

Calm and generally miſtreſs of herſelf as Althea was, for ſome moments ſhe was ſo much affected by this letter, as to be unable to determine what to do—but, as ſoon as the firſt painful, yet pleaſurable emotions ſubſided, ſhe determined to haſten to theſe intereſting young women, who more than ever were become objects of her ſolicitude and regard. Their projects of induſtry, which were likely to lead them to the very ſame place where Lady Dacres intended

intended to go, put another difficulty in the way of what Althea had projected, when ſhe thought of offering herſelf as a boarder in their family; and again ſhe looked around her in uncertainty whither to go, while almoſt every moment gave occaſion to ſome remark on the conduct of the family where ſhe now was, that added to the uneaſineſs ſhe felt from the neceſſity of ſtaying in it.

Her firſt purpoſe, however, was to viſit Lucy Marchmont, and ſhe determined to do ſo the next day.

Another difficulty, however, aroſe. Though Lady Dacres had hitherto appeared perfectly indifferent how ſhe diſpoſed of her time, yet her father's will ſeemed to put her very much in the power of her mother-in-law; and Althea knew that there is in many minds ſuch a love of authority, that it is often exerted where the governors have no affection for the governed, or intereſt in the actions they would control.—

Lady

Lady Dacres was aware that Althea had not one acquaintance in or near London: and ſhould ſhe either borrow one of the carriages, or hire one, to make a viſit in the neighbourhood of the town, it would probably be enquired to whom it was to be made; and the name of Marchmont was that of all others to which Lady Dacres ſeemed to inherit from her father, and to have taught to Sir Audley, an averſion, which their misfortunes appeared to have increaſed.

While Althea was debating with herſelf how to act, ſhe was ſurpriſed by a viſit from Mrs. Glaſton, formerly Linda Everſley, with whom her correſpondence had languiſhed for ſome months, but who, as Althea had heard ſince ſhe came to London, was lately married to a man of very large fortune. Her own troubles, and the reluctance with which ſuch ſort of letters are uſually written, had hitherto prevented her renewing

newing their correſpondence by a congratulation in form; and ſhe thought of nothing leſs than ſuch a viſit when Mrs. Glaſton was introduced.

Althea ſtared in aſtoniſhment when ſhe ſaw her, ſo entirely was ſhe changed! It was no longer the ſimple, unaffected, good-natured Linda Everſley, who had been the companion of her early youth. She now met a very fine lady, dreſſed in the extremity of the faſhion, with cheeks very red, and a voice very loud—who affected, however, to be extremely glad to ſee her, and told her ſo in phraſes which were a ſtrange mixture between her former Devonſhire dialect and the cant words of the day.

Althea could at any other time have found great amuſement in the fantaſtic attempts of her friend to imitate ſupreme faſhion; but, her mind entirely occupied by the Marchmonts, ſhe ſeized this opportunity to enquire what was known

known of their hiſtory, by one who was once the friend of the younger part of the family, and who had lived among thoſe by whom, in the days of their proſperity, the Marchmonts had been looked up to as the firſt people in the neighbourhood.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

N'écoutant, n'enviſageant, que ſoi!

THE new-married lady was much taken up with the idea of her own importance, and in deſcribing to Althea the fineries of which ſhe had become poſſeſſed, and the fine people ſhe lived among.—Nothing is more ridiculous than the conſequence of a ſilly creature, who, by ſome unexpected circumſtance, is ſuddenly placed in a ſituation greatly above her former rank of life. The unballaſted head of Linda Everſley, a girl whom even her own family had been uſed to conſider as of ſmall account, was quite overſet by it, and ſhe ſeemed to

to have viſited Althea leſs in the intention of renewing their former acquaintance, than for the purpoſe of exhibiting to her her imaginary importance. Althea, pitying her weakneſs, heard her for above half an hour with her uſual quiet complaiſance; and at length took occaſion, on her ſlightly naming ſome of their former acquaintance, to ſay—"But pray, among all your Devonſhire friends, what have you to tell me of the Marchmont family?"

"The Marchmonts?—Oh! I had loſt ſight of them ſo long!—Poor ſouls! I heard lately, I think, that they were ſadly off, and living ſomewhere about Lonnon; I actually meant tew or three times to have aſked about 'em, but ſomehew it always went out of my head, and Mr. Glaſton talks of our leaving Lonnon ſo ſewn, that I ſhall hardly have time. Its vaſtly ſavage in me, though—don't you think ſo?"

"Yes, indeed I *do*," ſaid Althea; "I am ſure your brother, who had ſo great an affection for ſome part of that family, would think ſo too . . . ."

"My brother!" interrupted the lady. "Lord, do you know that we vote him quite a quiz! He is *ſo* altered you would not know him—and leads ſuch a miſerable life! always mope, mope, mope in the country, talking about gardening and planting, and wearing one really quite to a thread. As to his horrible wife, ſhe's juſt the ſame as ſhe was; and I think by degrees, do you know, ſhe'll make my poor brother like her: for my part, ſhe uſed to *ſavage* me ſo, when I was forced to be there, that I ſhall never go near them any more."

"I cannot blame you," ſaid Althea, "for eſcaping from the lady; but ſurely Mr. Everſley's having the misfortune to have ſo unhappy a tempered woman

for

for his wife, ſhould rather ſtrengthen than leſſen the affection of his family towards *him*, eſpecially as you know he married her on the moſt laudable motives."

"Aye, that's very true, and I really love my brother vaſtly well; but that odious puſs of a woman! I'm ſure, if I were to ſee her, I ſhould downright quarrel with her; and, dear! you know one can do him no gued; and what's the uſe, you know, of making one's ſelf unhappy by ſeeing one's friends miſerable, when, after all, one cannot help them?"

"And is it," ſaid Althea, "upon that principle that you have ſo entirely given up the Marchmonts?"

"I don't know that I have given them up; but what can one do, you know?—Mr. Glaſton has ſuch newmeroos connections, and he expects me to viſit them all—and then, beſides, I really don't know where thoſe poor people

live.—But do you know, my dear, that ſomebody was a-telling me the other day, that young Marchmont was run away for debt, and that his mother and ſiſters were going to ſet up a ſhop?"

"You cannot have forgotten," ſaid Althea, whoſe cheeks were ſuffuſed with crimſon when Marchmont was thus named, "the noble and generous motives by which that reſpectable and worthy young man was actuated, when he incurred the debt for which he has ſince been ſo inhumanly perſecuted; and ſurely, if he has been compelled to quit his country that he may eſcape from thoſe who have ſo cruelly purſued him, you ſhould not give his evaſion ſo harſh a term as that of having *run away*."

"Well," replied Mrs. Glaſton coldly, "call it what you will—in fact, you know, it *is* really running away, though."

"But," enquired Althea, interrupting her, "if it be true that Mrs. Marchmont

mont and her daughters have taken the reſolution to enter into any way of buſineſs, ſurely they are highly to be reſpected for it—and would not all their former friends, do you think, endeavour to encourage and aſſiſt them?"

"Yes, ſure! yes, indeed!—I'm ſure, for my part, I'd be very glad to encourage them, poor things! and would recommend them to all my friends.—I dare ſay they'll meet with ſucceſs, and I'll take care to go to them as ſoon as I hear they're ſet up—but I really don't know whu to enquire of. I can't imagine, my dear, how I ſhall know when they're ſet up."

Though Althea was diſguſted enough with theſe inſolent airs of protection and patronage, from a perſon who was ſo lately raiſed, as far as money could do it, above thoſe in every other reſpect ſo greatly her ſuperiors, ſhe debated a moment with herſelf whether ſhe ſhould not, by ſaying what ſhe knew to

be the Marchmonts' intentions, ſecure ſuch good offices as Mrs. Glaſton could do them, though at the riſk of ſubjecting them to her childiſh impertinence; and it occurred to her that, by means of this fooliſh woman, ſhe might be enabled to make her viſit without any diſagreeable explanations with Lady Dacres; though, being ſo accompanied, if indeed Mrs. Glaſton would deign to viſit people who propoſed *keeping a ſhop*, would, ſhe feared, make her own viſit leſs welcome.

Something, however, it was worth while to riſk: ſhe therefore related to Mrs. Glaſton what ſhe knew of the preſent ſituation of the female part of the Marchmont family.

During this little narration, the cold exclamation of—"Indeed?—Really?—Poor things!—Oh! I think them quite right—" gave to Althea but little hope of having moved the ſelfiſh inſipidity of her auditor; to whom, however, ſhe at length

length ventured to diſcloſe her wiſh of viſiting them, and aſked if Mrs. Glaſton would accompany her.

"What, to Fulham? Lord, my dear, I am afraid I can never go ſo far to-morrow; for we go out of town in leſs than a week, and I have tew thouſand things to do——but," added ſhe, after a moment's pauſe, "if *my* carriage will be of any uſe to you, you ſhall be vaſtly welcome to it. We have *tew*, and I can take the coach out to-morrow, if you chuſe to have the chariot."

Althea, conſidering from how many difficulties this offer would deliver her, accepted it, though ſhe was aware that Mrs. Glaſton offered it much more from oſtentation than friendſhip.

Mrs. Glaſton then aſſured her it ſhould be at the door at ten o'clock the next morning; and, riſing to go away, ſaid—"You will give my *ſervice* to the poor girls, and pray tell them, that though I can't get ſo far out of

town, I ſhall be vaſtly glad to ſee their pretty ingenious works, whenever it *lays in my way*; and that I'll recommend them to a great many of my friends, who are going to Margate this ſeaſon, if they ſet up there. Well! good day to you, my dear! I'll try to ſee you again before I go out of town. Good morning to you!—You are vaſtly welcome to the chariot."

To all this, which paſſed as Mrs. Glaſton deſcended the ſtairs, Althea anſwered very ſlightly, and, returning to her own room, almoſt repented that ſhe had accepted her half-inſulting kindneſs; while her viſitor withdrew mightily ſatisfied with herſelf, and with the impreſſion of her elegance and importance, which ſhe nothing doubted having left on the mind of her old acquaintance.

Althea now ſent a meſſage to Lady Dacres, to ſay ſhe was going to pay a viſit the next morning, a few miles from London, in Mrs. Glaſton's carriage, "if her

her Ladyſhip had no objection?"—A cold acquieſcence was immediately returned.

At an early hour then, the following morning, Althea ſet out on her ſhort journey. As ſhe went, a thouſand reflections occupied her mind. She was now, for the firſt time, to ſee one of Marchmont's family—ſhe was to learn, what hitherto had appeared myſterious to her, the character and temper of his mother, which would probably be diſcovered by the manner of her daughter. Buſied in theſe conjectures, and in recalling all that had paſſed with Marchmont himſelf, the road was hardly diſcerned, nor was Althea rouſed from her reverie till ſhe found herſelf at the door of a ſmall lodging-houſe, a little diſtant from the end of the town, whither ſhe had been directed. As Lucy Marchmont was not appriſed of her arrival, ſhe had the precaution to write a card before ſhe ſet out—remembering, that

hardly any thing is ſo uneaſy as a firſt viſit, where the parties are unknown to each other. Having ſent in this note, her anxious expectation did not laſt long; for Lucy Marchmont, whom ſhe would almoſt any where have known from her reſemblance to her brother, came down to receive her. In that ſort of breathleſs agitation, which a deſire to pleaſe particularly, and the fear of not pleaſing, give to a young and timid mind, ſhe led her viſitor to a ſmall ſitting-room on the firſt floor, and introduced her to her youngeſt ſiſter: then, recovering a little from her confuſion, Lucy began to expreſs her gratitude to Althea for coming; but, trying to ſpeak of her mother and of her brother, her voice failed her, and ſhe burſt into tears.

By the ſenſible mildneſs of Althea, had ſhe been in a condition to have exerted it, her new friend would ſoon have been re-aſſured; but it was ſo long

ſince

ſince ſhe had ſeen any one whom ſhe was diſpoſed to love, and with whom ſhe could yield to the tenderneſs and affection of her character towards thoſe who intereſted her, that Althea was unable to help weeping too; and, inſtead of the firſt meeting of two ſtrangers, it appeared to be the renewal of ſome long-cheriſhed friendſhip that had been interrupted by misfortune.

As there was great good ſenſe on both ſides, without any of that affected ſenſibility which is hardly leſs unpleaſant than cold indifference, they ſoon recovered their compoſure; and Althea, though ſhe had never accuſtomed herſelf to thoſe violent flights of ſudden friendſhip which ſometimes are pretended to be felt at firſt ſight, yet ſoon diſcovered that, in Lucy Marchmont, ſhe had found a perſon capable of awakening her from the lifeleſs and joyleſs ſtate in which ſhe had lived ever ſince the departure of Marchmont himſelf.

ſelf. And indeed it was ſo long ſince the voice of kindneſs and real affection had met her ear, it was ſo long ſince her heart had felt any but unpleaſant ſenſations, that the ſtyle of mind and converſation of Lucy appeared to her doubly attractive; and when, in addition to her perſonal merit, ſhe conſidered her as the ſiſter of Marchmont, it ſeemed as if in her was concentred all that could attract and delight her.

It was leſs the beauty of this charming girl, that was ſo ſuddenly ſeducing, than the mingled ſimplicity and vivacity of her manner. Her pleaſing voice, her expreſſive countenance, and the ſoul that ſeemed to animate her eyes; the tender enthuſiaſm with which ſhe mentioned her brother, and the more ſerious affection mingled with ſomething like uneaſineſs and concern, which Althea remarked, when ſhe ſpoke of her mother; the good ſenſe and courage that

ſeemed

ſeemed to enter into all her ideas as to their propoſed plan of life; and that deſire of independence, however humble, in which true and laudable pride really conſiſts: all theſe traits of character impreſſed on the mind of Althea the moſt favourable idea of her young friend; ſhe ſeemed to have acquired ſomething like a new exiſtence in having found a mind correſponding with her own; and Marchmont from that moment became dearer to her than ever—ſhe loved him for his ſiſter, and for himſelf.

Before Althea ſpoke of him, ſhe wiſhed to know how much of what had paſſed during his reſidence at Eaſtwoodleigh he had communicated to his family—while Lucy Marchmont, who really knew more of his attachment to Althea than the reſt, dared not even hint at the knowledge ſhe had; for nothing like hope had ever entered into thoſe little ſketches of the riſe and progreſs of his paſſion, with which he had occaſionally

occaſionally indulged himſelf when he talked to Lucy.

Equally ingenuous however, and with minds ſo well ſuited, they ſoon underſtood each other; and Lucy Marchmont ſpoke with very little reſerve on the affairs of her family, as believing ſhe was ſpeaking to one generouſly concerned for what related to them.

"Though I have ſeen," ſaid ſhe, "but little of the world, indeed nothing of that ſort of ſociety that is generally called ſo, I am not ignorant that young women totally deſtitute of fortune as we are have no chance of marrying. Well! it is very ſad, to be ſure, to be predeſtined old maids: but a million of others, with as many pretenſions as we could have had, had our poor father been more fortunate, live ſingle; and I am ſure there are ſuch who are living happier, and more quietly and comfortably, than many women who have families. But I *muſt* not, ſays family pride, go into buſineſs,

buſineſs, for I am deſcended from people who were of great conſequence two hundred years ago, and of ſtill more in the laſt century. Ah, dear! my anceſtors will *now* do nothing for me. Not a citizen, not even a wealthy tradeſman, will take either of us to ennoble his houſe; for in this country it is very certain money is reſpected the moſt, whatever influence rank may have when united to it. What then are we to do? If we could exiſt without doing ſomething for ourſelves, which I am convinced, whatever ſtruggles we may make, is utterly impoſſible, I declare I think we ſhall be happier if we have ſomething to employ us. Two or three forlorn ancient ſpinſters, juſt creeping through a vegetative ſort of life in a cheap country town, has ſomething to my apprehenſion moſt woefully gloomy and depreſſive. Who will care for us? The people among whom we live will no more reſpect us, though our great

grandfathers

grandfathers were cavaliers, than they reverence the royal oak itſelf: half the world know nothing about Charles, or his martyrdom; and more than half the reſt think the Engliſh people on the other ſide were in the right, and the cavaliers only obſtinate proud fools.—Whereas, if we exert the few faculties we have, we ſhall be too buſy to think of the neglect of thoſe who were once our equals, or to dread the ſupercilious ſcorn of people that know no crime ſo great as poverty. By degrees our repugnance will wear away. We ſhall be amply repaid for the ſacrifice of our pride, by the delight of obtaining more conveniences and comforts for my mother; of having a cheerful home for our brother, *when* he returns!"

Althea could not ſtifle a ſigh, as her new friend ſaid this; for ſhe ſeemed to ſpeak doubtfully, and to lay peculiar emphaſis on the word *when*. Lucy Marchmont heſitated a moment, and proceeded.

"My

"My eldeſt ſiſter now ſeems to be convinced that we cannot do better; and we have together, I hope, conquered the remaining reluctance of my mother herſelf—though ſhe ſtill doubts whether, on my brother's account (at leaſt till we have his conſent to do ſo), we ſhould exhibit the name of Marchmont on a ſhop-bill. But indeed, my dear Miſs Dacres, this ſeems to me to be a diſtinction without a difference; and though I have in general the greateſt deference for my mother's opinion, I cannot diſcover that we ſhould gain any thing by this laſt indulgence of lingering pride, while we ſhould certainly loſe conſiderable advantages. Beſides, I have no notion of humouring the arrogance of that Lady Silcheſter, who does not chooſe forſooth that her relations ſhould be ſhop-women! She affects to ſay at the ſame time, that, living only on her jointure, ſhe cannot do any thing for us. For my part, I declare that if ſhe could,

I ſhould

I ſhould prefer the humbleſt independence to the miſery of exiſting on the *bounty*, or, as one may well call it, the *charity*, of that aunt of mine; and ſo far from thinking this a want of pride, it ſeems to me to be the trueſt pride. It is not however ſurpriſing, that my ſiſter and I ſhould feel and judge differently. She is, you know, two years older than my brother, and of courſe was brought up in affluence, and looked forward to a life of proſperity from her firſt recollection; while *I*, who am almoſt five years younger, have, ſince I have been growing up, been witneſs to the difficulties and diſtreſſes of my family, and in conſequence have inſenſibly become more prepared to meet them. It is true, that my poor father, who could not endure that my mother ſhould ever ſuffer the leaſt anxiety, always tried to hide from her and from us the decaying ſtate of his fortunes. She affected to be deceived, becauſe he wiſhed to deceive her; but

ſhe

ſhe uſed to weep for hours together as we younger children were at play round her: and when they did not ſuſpect me of attending to their converſation, I have liſtened to many heart-breaking dialogues between her and Amelia; while, as ſoon as he thought me old enough to be reaſonable, my brother uſed to confide to me his fears for his father and all of us, for of himſelf he never ſeemed to think; and very often, before he went laſt to France (for it was long before my father would conſent to that), he uſed to form ſchemes for entering on the world in ſome buſineſs or profeſſion that might aſſiſt us, and retrieve his father's affairs. Perhaps you may have remarked a part of the grounds that were once the park at Eaſtwoodleigh, down beyond where the caſcade then was, there was formerly a long row of walnut and cheſnut trees, reaching near half a mile. They are cut down now, and only the roots remain! It was there,

that

that in the fine evenings of the laſt two ſummers our dear Armyn were accuſtomed to walk with me, and that we uſed, as we traverſed the avenue backwards and forwards, to weary ourſelves with hopes and fears, with conjectures and ſchemes: and ſometimes all my brother's courage did not prevent him from communicating to me anticipations of future calamity, which have, alas! been too fatally verified ſince. As he remarked the beauty of the view, while the ſetting-ſun illuminating the ſea appeared magnificently through the branches and boles of thoſe fine trees, how often has he ſaid, that if he could but ſee his father and his dear mother happy in a more humble ſituation, he ſhould relinquiſh all the beauties of his native place without a ſigh; but that to live in it as we then lived, and to ſee the ineffectual ſtruggles of his father undermining and deſtroying his conſtitution, was more than he was able to bear. Then, perhaps,

when

when evening had ſtolen upon us unawares, he ſaw by the light in the houſe, that my father was gone up to his bedroom, and we haſtened in; when uſually my brother took a book and read to him till he went to ſleep.—Ah! I well remember the effort Armyn made to appear calm and eaſy on thoſe occaſions. He uſually took care to procure no books of fiction but ſuch as were of a cheerful caſt; but once, among ſome other works of entertainment that he had ſent for, was the novel of Julia de Roubigné. We had heard it praiſed, and, as my father was pretty well that night, he bade us all come into his room; when, after he was in bed, Armyn ſat down to read it. But he had not gone farther than that pathetic and natural deſcription of the old ſervant Le Blanc, when he had ſeen his maſter's favourite horſe neglected by the owner of the eſtate he had loſt, than Armyn affected not to like the book. My father, however,

bidding

bidding him go on, his voice faltered more and more, till at laſt he threw it down, and haſtened away. Poor Amelia took it up, and put it ſilently on the table. Nobody offered to go on with it—nobody was able to ſpeak. Ah! how many ſuch ſcenes recur to my mind as I now ſit of an evening in theſe poor lodgings, and look over the little bit of garden that belongs to them, and the nurſery and kitchen grounds beyond! All that then paſſed ſeems preſent to me—but ſuch retroſpect only gives me pain, and diſables me from looking ſteadily towards the future, which after all one muſt determine to do, if one would not be uſeleſs in one's ſelf, and perhaps burdenſome to others."

More and more pleaſed with the ſenſibility and ſenſe of this intereſting girl, the good heart of Althea made her endeavour to explain, that her own ſituation was neither much ſuperior in point of fortune, nor at all more enviable in regard

regard to other circumſtances, than that ſhe had juſt heard deſcribed. Every moment increaſed her pleaſure in the company of Lucy Marchmont, till ſhe found it difficult to determine on leaving her. Nothing had yet been ſaid of the project ſhe had formed of offering to become a boarder in the houſe of Mrs. Marchmont, wherever ſhe might be fixed. If Althea had before thought of this as the moſt deſirable plan that could offer itſelf, the preſent interview with Lucy redoubled all her anxiety to adopt it.—At length ſhe ventured to ſpeak of it; and was inſtantly convinced, as the lucid eyes of her young friend ſparkled with delight, that by one of the family at leaſt her offer would be joyfully received.

Their mutual confidence was now rapid in its progreſs; and before they parted, which Althea delayed till the very laſt moment poſſible, it was ſettled that Lucy Marchmont ſhould write to her

her mother; while Althea on her part was to attempt to diſcover what were Lady Dacres's intentions; and, ſhould ſhe have reaſon to believe her Ladyſhip wiſhed her to chooſe ſome other reſidence—in that caſe ſhe was to endeavour at obtaining her ſanction for making her election with Mrs. Marchmont. The hope that this plan might finally ſucceed, reconciled them to the painful ceremony of bidding adieu—when Lucy was left happier than ſhe had been for ſome time, and Althea returned, with increaſed attachment for the Marchmonts, to her ſolitude in a faſhionable ſtreet in a great city.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

. . . . . In adverſity
The mind grows tough by buffeting the tempeſt.

THE uſual accompaniments of a narrow mind and a ſelfiſh heart, cunning and ſuſpicion, were ſtrongly marked in the character of Lady Dacres. Althea, though formerly a ſufferer from both, was little upon her guard againſt either. Artleſs herſelf, it never entered her head to imagine that her mother-in-law hardly

"Drank her tea without a ſtratagem,"

or that ſhe owed even the little forbearance from rudeneſs ſhe had experienced

ſince her father's death, and the apartment and board that were ſullenly afforded her, to a hope entertained by Lady Dacres, that her little fortune, which ſhe notwithſtanding affected to treat with ſo much contempt, might, by Althea's dying unmarried, belong at ſome future period to her own children. Somebody had beſides hinted lately to this genuine deſcendant of Sir Ralph Gunſtone, that Althea, and two female couſins whom ſhe hardly knew, would be coheireſſes to the fortune of Mr. Trevyllian, ſhould he, as was not improbable from his manner of life, die without legitimate children. In that caſe Althea might poſſeſs the third of the very conſiderable landed property, which being entailed on the heirs of his father, he could not alienate; and though ſhe herſelf ſcarcely recollected that ſuch a man as this relation of hers exiſted, Lady Dacres, who had received the hint from Mohun, failed not occaſionally to make

make enquiries after him: and the reports ſhe had lately collected, greatly helped to reconcile her to the preſent abode of Althea at her houſe, and even to the idea of her adding another member to the family during their intended abode at Margate——though even this plan had not efficacy enough to take from the manner of Lady Dacres, towards her daughter-in-law, that ungracious and repulſive coldneſs which always made Althea comfortleſs and uneaſy in her preſence; a manner, which, now that it was contraſted by the ingenuous ſimplicity and unaffected warmth of Lucy Marchmont, ſeemed to become more and more inſupportable. In quitting the apartment of her ſtep-mother after the next interview on the evening of the day of viſiting Fulham, ſhe had almoſt determined to leave her houſe at whatever riſk of incurring blame for imprudence, or even of throwing herſelf, unſolicited,

into a family, to the principal of which ſhe was ſtill a ſtranger.

On cooler reflection, however, the good ſenſe and propriety of mind that Althea in a ſuperior degree poſſeſſed, operated to deter her from any proceeding that might call her correctneſs of character in queſtion, or ſeem to indicate the ſlighteſt failure of reſpect to the memory of her father. She ſaw from the late conduct of Lady Dacres, that her fears of additional expence were for ſome reaſon or other leſs prevalent.—She had even named herſelf her intention of removing her family to Margate, adding a formal propoſal for Althea to accompany them; and the governeſs ſeemed to have had orders gradually to unſay all ſhe had ſaid before on this ſubject: yet ſtill there was a ſtyle of treating her, which ſhe now found more difficult than ever to ſubmit to. After mature deliberation, therefore, Althea determined to practiſe in this inſtance what ſhe

ſhe had been early taught—and to ſacrifice to prudence, and to the opinion of the world, her own wiſhes, which led her to become an inmate with the female part of the Marchmont family, however they might quit the rank of life they had formerly filled.

This ſacrifice of inclination to duty had the greater merit, as ever ſince Althea had ſeen Lucy Marchmont ſhe had indulged herſelf in reflecting with pleaſure on the power ſhe poſſeſſed of aſſiſting in the reſpectable induſtry to which Mrs. Marchmont and her daughters had devoted themſelves. The habits ſhe had been accuſtomed to in early life, had been ſuch as took from the ideas of confinement, and conſtant occupation, all their unpleaſant circumſtances; and her ſkill as a milliner, little as it had lately been called into practice, was by no means inconſiderable. The paſſion of Mrs. Trevyllian for plants had taught her niece, without the aſſiſtance of a

maſter, to delineate them*: by copying attentively the beſt botanical plates, and afterwards drawing with minute exactneſs from nature itſelf, Althea had in this art acquired unuſual perfection.—But during her reſidence at Eaſtwoodleigh, having no longer her maternal friend to gratify, as there were no vegetable novelties to copy, and ſhe had already exhauſted all the printed collection of her aunt, ſhe had amuſed herſelf with another ſpecies of drawing, which ſhe imagined might now be applied to ornamental works for ſale, and create for her unfortunate friends another branch of their little trade.

On theſe projects, which ſeemed to originate almoſt ſolely in her friendſhip for Lucy Marchmont, but which were, perhaps,

"Still but lurking love at laſt,"

* Any occupation of this kind has lately been called by an Author, whoſe Dramas are more numerous than his Novels—"libelling Nature!"

Althea

Althea had dwelt till ſhe became ſo fond of them, that it was only the joint effort of reaſon and virtue that could induce her even to poſtpone them, to accompany Lady Dacres to Margate (ſhould ſhe go thither), and act afterwards as the circumſtances of her behaviour and the ſituation of the Marchmonts might determine. It was not, however, without the moſt painful anxiety that Althea awaited the anſwer which Lucy expected from her mother. It came—but accompanied by ſuch a packet from Marchmont himſelf to his ſiſter, as for a while ſuſpended every idea but of him; of the dangers he had incurred, and was ſtill liable to; and the cruel apprehenſions it brought with it, that ſhe might never ſee him more. The following were the contents of his letter to Lucy—it was without name or date; and from the different colours of the ink, and the manner of the writing, it had evidently

been done by ſnatches and ſtarts, as the preſſure of circumſtances allowed.

LETTER.

"So ſtrange, my Lucy, have been the ſcenes I have paſſed through, I look back to them with a mind ſo much bewildered by their rapidity and ſingularity, as to be almoſt unable to trace their progreſs diſtinctly, even if the ſituation I am in now would allow me to ſend you my eventful hiſtory. Ah! how much pain has (I hope) been ſaved to my poor mother, by her not knowing whither her exile was gone! for, had my being at Paris been certain, what apprehenſions would not the accounts you have ſeen in the public prints (accounts too well authenticated) have given to her, you my Lucy, and the other dear girls! There, however, I have been; and it is not at a great diſtance from that

ſcene

ſcene of phrenſy and of horrors that I now write to you: but I am ſafe, and ſhall ſoon be on my way ſouthward.

"A Swiſs ſervant travelling with an Engliſhman who has with great difficulty procured a protection by which he can ſafely return, or at leaſt which encourages him to attempt it, has promiſed to put this into the poſt-office at the firſt town he reaches in England.

"'If Engliſhmen then can obtain paſſports, why does my brother remain in dangers and in horrors?'

"Such is the queſtion my Lucy ſeems to aſk. But (beſides that I arrived here at a moment when I was compelled to paſs for a man of another nation, and to aſſign very different cauſes for my coming, which at the preſent moment I cannot explain) wherefore ſhould I return to my country?—To be a burden to thoſe I love?—to make their little leſs?—and to embitter their hours by fears for my perſonal ſafety, which at

this diſtance they cannot feel? Even the fear of a priſon, in another diviſion of the globe, from which I have eſcaped, when many others have been confined in it, is infinitely leſs terrible to my imagination than confinement in my own.

"'In great oppreſſions,' ſays Lord Bacon, 'the ſame things that provoke the patience, alſo break the courage.'

"I am no complainer, my Lucy; but I own that, in regard to the pains and penalties which wait on poverty in my native land, I am a coward—and whence ariſes this? Becauſe I was brought up to think ſo highly of the government under which I was born, that I believed it faultleſs, incapable of loſing its ſpirit of juſtice, and impoſſible to be amended: yet at the age when I am moſt ſuſceptible of pain and pleaſure, when I truſt my mind is unadulterated by ſyſtems, and my heart untainted by either vice or prejudice—I find myſelf, by the

abuſe

abuſe of thoſe very laws I ſo highly venerated, condemned to become an exile from my country, or to add, in the very prime of my youth, another unhappy victim to the numbers condemned to linger out their years in the ſqualid miſery of legal confinement.

"I have been ſuddenly broken in upon, and compelled, though rather on account of others than on my own, to remove; and my Swiſs acquaintance has been obliged to diſappear. There is no deſcribing the ſtrange and fluctuating ſtate of every thing here—at leaſt till an interval of calm ſhall ſuffer the mind to ſurvey the ſucceſſion of events with more coolneſs and preciſion. Let me turn from them now to what yet makes my own country dear to me. Ah! why even there muſt I implore the aſſiſtance of that *ſanguine diſpoſition* that ought not to forſake us at three-and-twenty? Why muſt I *try* to believe that the dear group are well? and that I ſee in my

mind's eye my mother looking leſs like a fine marble ſtatue than ſhe did when, ſtruggling to argue down her acute ſenſibility, ſhe gave me, with pale lips and eyes incapable of weeping, her farewel bleſſing, bidding me for her ſake preſerve my liberty, and be careful of my life! It is now many months ſince, and very ſtrange have been the ſcenes I have witneſſed—my heart has been ſeverely torn. Driven by private calamity from England to witneſs more extended miſery here, where I had been uſed to hear the voice of joy, and to ſee only the moſt thoughtleſs gaiety—continually involved in circumſtances the moſt extraordinary, and living in a courſe of deception, to which not even ſelf-preſervation would *reconcile* me if it were not neceſſary to ſecure my ſafety, that I may live for my family, or if it were injurious to any human being here, I ſometimes think myſelf in the delirium of a fever, and ſometimes I feel, as I

ſee

ſee every body elſe do, in that kind of aſtoniſhment that has the effect of giving a temporary palſy to the mind.

"We ceaſe, even where it ſeems ſafe, to communicate remarks to each other; but every one looks on his neighbour, where he yet happens to have one, ſilently awaiting what is to happen next.

"The beginning of Auguſt.

"I renew my letter, which I have kept by me many days. I am now removed farther from the crater of the volcano. However, though I have loſt the opportunity that ſeemed to be offered me, I will continue to write.—One day or other, if not immediately, it may reach you. At leaſt I may now have leſs to apprehend from *les viſites domiciliaires*, which, where I have lately been, were likely to involve thoſe in ſome

ſome unpleaſant difficulties, on whom papers were found that could be even conſtrued into meanings of diſapprobation.

"You will hear from other quarters of general events, and can perhaps imagine ſo much of the ſcenes of anarchy and wildneſs, that mine ſhall be all ſketches of the individual. My Lucy will allow me to be an egotiſt to her.

"In this confidence then I leave both accounts of, or remarks on, thoſe ſtriking events which have harrowed up the heart, while they have baffled the calculation of the coldeſt politician, to relate ſome of my own *feelings*, rather than the whole of my adventures.

"At a little cabaret, far from any high road, in that part of France that was formerly the Bourbonnois, I am writing to you, my Lucy. It is now near a fortnight ſince I have left Paris—in leſs than another I hope to reach the abode of

of Lavergnac, of whom I have no certain intelligence. I wiſh I could convey to you a picture of the ſimple ſcene before me—it forms a ſtrange contraſt to that I have left; here all is tranquil, though it is now no longer gay:—my old landlord looks at me inquiſitively, as he preſents me with the black bread, in which buck-wheat is often intermixed, but which ripe fruit makes ſufficiently palatable. He pours out with a trembling hand (for he is in his eighty-fifth year) the weak wine of the country, and aſks if I inſiſt on his drinking with me to *Vive la Republique!*—I anſwer, that I am not a Frenchman, and hold it wrong to concern myſelf with their politics.—*Comment, Monſieu? Cadidée*, (my old friend is a Gaſcon) *Monſieu n'eſt pas Français?*—His grand-children, Jaquette and Louiſon, and Henri and Phillippe, come in from the village. They relate what they have ſeen, and depoſit the neceſſaries they have purchaſed.

His

His old female ſervant, Monique, is called to put them away, and *Monſieu* eſcapes to the hill behind the houſe, where a ſtream runs through a wild valley—reminding me of the ſcene in that drama we have ſo often read together, when we projected how we would act "As You Like It" in the wood which was *once* the ſcene of our early happineſs. Ah! how perpetually before me are thoſe ſcenes, and ſtill more ſo others I *have ſince paſſed* at Eaſtwoodleigh! They ſeize on my imagination as if they were yet preſent; I forget, for a time, where I am. Then a group of children, from a neighbouring vineyard, paſs me at a diſtance, ſinging, in their way, patriotic tunes, of the meaning of which they have no idea; or a ſtraggling cow, with a bell round her neck, that has been ſeeking her food near me, is ſought for, by her owner, with all that lively clamour ſo general among the women of theſe provinces.

I ſtart

I ſtart from my dream, and find myſelf—ah! how far from happineſs, and from *that* country, which, ſtep-mother as ſurely it has proved to me, I ſtill conſider as mine!

"But it is not only in this ſolitary and remote place, inhabited only by peaſants, that I have had leiſure to indulge all that gloomy retroſpection which a continual courſe of painful events has for ſome time rendered habitual to me. I had determined to leave Paris, leſs on account of the perſonal danger which menaced the Engliſh of every deſcription, than becauſe my very ſoul was ſick of the wild aſſemblage of ideotiſm and phrenſy which I every day ſaw; and was eager, at all events, to quit people whoſe folly called for my contempt, while their ferocity excited my abhorrence.

"The plan of my journey (with the intended arrangement of which it is not neceſſary to trouble you) I had concerted

certed ſome days before with a French friend, whom I believed to be a very good judge of the ſtate of the country; and having ſettled every thing at my lodgings, I left the town on foot, and walked to Verſailles, where I was to find a perſon in the park at night-fall who was to be my companion a part of the way.

"By the time I reached the ſpot where we had appointed to find each other, it was four o'clock in the evening. A heavy gloom hung over every object, and the exceſſive heat ſeemed to have had already the effect of autumnal winds on the trees; for the leaves were in many places faded, and ſlowly fell on my melancholy path.

"I waited in vain for my friend. It was already paſt the hour when he aſſured me he would be ready, and I was ſure I had not miſtaken the place. Another and another hour wore away—the gloom increaſed around me—the

uſual

uſual noiſes of a town, though Verſailles is now indeed more than half-deſerted, became fainter and fainter. It ſeemed certain that my friend had been prevented. Perhaps he was arreſted and impriſoned. I became ſo uneaſy, that I ſhould have ſought him at his abode, about a half-mile from that part of the park where we had agreed to meet; but I conſidered that, if any thing like what I feared had happened, I ſhould endanger my own ſafety without being at all enabled to contribute to his. Sometimes I determined to return to Paris; but there I was leſs likely to know what had been his deſtiny. I had now for two hours vainly expected him; and I no longer believed myſelf ſafe where I was, yet was uncertain whither to go, and indeed almoſt indifferent. The deſpondence that crept upon me half annihilated my faculties; but I thought of all I had dear to me in England, and became aſhamed of indulging it. You

know,

know, my Lucy, that I have tried very earneſtly to acquire a certain degree of fortitude, with leſs ſucceſs, perhaps, than would have been mine if I had not been vulnerable on the ſide of beings for whoſe ſake only I wiſh to live.

"It is but a gloomy kind of reſignation that we learn from comparing our lot with the fate of others; and never, I own, did it contribute much to reconcile me to my wayward deſtiny.—'Why ſhould you complain?' have ſome of thoſe ſage friends often ſaid to me, who, like Sir Peter Teazle, never in their lives refuſed me *their advice*. 'Why ſhould you complain? Are not Mr. Such-a-one, and Captain Such-a-one, nay, Sir John, and Lord ******, as much under pecuniary difficulties as you are?'—Poſſibly they may, my good Sirs; but thoſe conſiderations do not enable me at all the better to endure the evils that ſurround me. I am very ſorry for *them*, but quite as ſorry for myſelf, as

if

if I ſaw *them* enjoying the higheſt proſperity.—'But, my dear Sir,' cry my conſolers, 'they bear their misfortunes lightly, and even gaily—and yet they brought them all upon themſelves.'—There, indeed, have I replied, I have the advantage of them.

"Thus, my deareſt Lucy, if I could have found at this moment any conſolation in compariſon, the poor wandering individual, alone in a foreign and an hoſtile country, might have found objects of compaſſion, in reflecting on the fate of the late poſſeſſors of the immenſe pile I ſaw before me; and I might have ſaid, The exile, once the owner and heir of Eaſtwoodleigh, is leſs wretched than the ſurviving owners of Verſailles!

"Inſtead, however, of long indulging theſe or any other ſpeculations, it was more to the purpoſe to conſider what was to be done. My reſolutions on this head were quickened by the ſudden appearance of a man, who aſked me, abruptly

abruptly enough, if I did not wait there for Citoyen D'Albiac, which was the name my friend was known by. I anſwered, with ſome heſitation, that I did. The man then put into my hand a ſhort note, which I with difficulty read. He conjured me to haſten to him at Paris; adding only, that he could not then aſſign his reaſons for breaking his appointment, or for the requeſt he made, but that much depended on his ſeeing me immediately at the place whither the bearer of his note would conduct me. I agreed to go without heſitation, though I drew no favourable augury from the ſtyle of D'Albiac's note, or the manner of my companion, which was hurried, incoherent, and confuſed. Anxiety for my friend was not unmingled with ſome ſuſpicions in regard to my own ſecurity; but ſomething was to be riſqued, and I followed my conductor into one of thoſe vehicles for the accommodation of chance paſſengers which paſs at almoſt

moſt all hours between Paris and Verſailles.

"We got out near the Pont Royal; and my guide, who had hardly ſpoken on the way, becauſe there were other people in the cabriolet, now deſired me to follow him. There was an unuſual buſtle in the ſtreets; and on our reaching the Place Louis Quinze (the ſcene of ſo much calamity under its new name) we ſaw the people all running towards the Thuilleries. Of the few I addreſſed, who would give themſelves time to anſwer my queſtion—of what is the matter? each gave me a different, and ſome very abſurd and impoſſible reaſons, as the cauſe of the crowd they were ſo eagerly haſtening to increaſe. It was fortunate for me that none of them ſeemed to have the leaſt ſuſpicion of my being an Engliſhman.

"On advancing farther, the numbers increaſed, and I loſt my conductor.—Les gens d'armes on horſeback, and parties of

of armed citizens, were attempting to diſperſe the people, and to prevent them from preſſing into the garden of the Thuilleries. Some ſevere *coups de ſabre* fell among them as I paſſed, being carried, by the preſs, acroſs *le Pont Tournant*. When I found myſelf in the gardens, I looked again around me for the man who was to carry me where D'Albiac expected me; but I could neither ſee him, nor indeed diſtinguiſh any longer the faces of the hurrying crowds, who either ran or were driven paſt me by the ſoldiers: but, for whatever reaſon, the *Terras des Feuillans* ſeemed to be their *point de ralliement*; while my only purpoſe was, to make my way through the upper gate, and from thence to endeavour to gain ſome intelligence of D'Albiac among ſome of his former connections.

"But from what I had by this time collected from the flying crowd, I found that ſeveral perſons had been impri-

ſoned,

ſoned, and there was an order to arreſt all the Engliſh. I could now hardly doubt but that D'Albiac, whom I believed to have been ſome time among the ſuſpected, was one of thoſe who were confined; and I thought that he had ſent for me to give me notice of my danger before his own was ſo apparent.

"While, doubting what to do, I concealed myſelf amidſt the darkeſt ſhade of the trees, I found the ſhouts of the people and the menaces of the ſoldiers ſuddenly ceaſe. A ſtorm threatening, though it did not fall, had helped the endeavours of the armed parties thus ſuddenly to clear the gardens. The orator, mounted on a ſtool, who had been propounding political axioms to the crowd, was gone, with all his audience. But from whatever cauſe his eloquence had been ſo peremptorily ſilenced, it was highly probable that whoever was now found attempting to quit this place

would undergo a ſtrict interrogatory; and once more I felt myſelf guilty of having an Engliſh countenance, which diſdained always to befriend me as effectually as my tongue. However, I went towards the *Pont Tournant* once more: but the guard was mounted there; and by their quick and fierce "*Qui va là?*" and "*Point d'entrée, Meſſieurs!*" which I heard, I was ſoon convinced that for met here was "*point de ſortie*" without great hazard. This certainty determined me to remain where I was. I thought I might eaſily paſs unobſerved among the firſt crowds that ſhould enter in the morning, and then gain ſome intelligence of D'Albiac. My clothes were dark, the trees large, and the gloomy evening ſunk ſo entirely into night, that I was no longer in any apprehenſion of being obſerved.

"The murmur of the ſtreets was the only noiſe I heard—cries of '*La Séance du Soir*,' or, '*Des Evénemens nouveaux*,'

veaux,' ſomewhat louder than the reſt: even theſe, by degrees, died away, and the hum became fainter and fainter, till I heard nothing but the hoarſe and ſullen voices of the ſentinels round the Thuilleries, anſwered by thoſe at the Louvre, and the word going ſolemnly round from poſt to poſt. If heavy clouds were for a little broken away, I ſaw a few faint ſtars, as they appeared from time to time, and were loſt among the black and billowy vapours; and added to the hideous gloom of all around me were ſenſations of uncertainty, more uneaſy than actual fear of ſome viſible danger. I left my concealment, and walked up towards the front of the palace. All was deſolate, ſilent, dreary—and the idea of what it *had* been contraſted ſtrongly with what it was!

"I had been reading, a few days before, a pompous account of theſe gardens, and of the Chateau ſuch as it was in the time of Louis the Four-

teenth. One of the avenues was then called L'Allée des Soupirs. I turned to that which I imagined had, at ſuch a period, been the haunt of happy lovers. Alas! it might ſtill be called L'Allée des Soupirs—but from cauſes how different!

"I have written ſo much, my Lucy, of my reflections, that I muſt paſs lightly over facts, or the little paper I have here will fail me. Imagine me then, in deſpite of my Engliſh viſage, eſcaping unnoticed, with the firſt influx of people, into the garden of the Thuilleries, and my concern to find that all my fears of the detention of D'Albiac were but too true. Imagine the neceſſity there was for my immediate departure, weary as I found myſelf, for I knew I was in the moſt imminent danger of arreſt. The barriers were ſhut, but I found means to get through them; and with the paſſport I had procured the day before, in purſuance of my friend's

friend's plan, I ſet forward, and walked about four leagues; when being quite exhauſted, and believing myſelf out of any immediate danger, I took ſome repoſe at a ſmall inn, frequented, like this, only by the lower ranks of people. The quiet I found here, and indeed a ſlight indiſpoſition from the extreme heat, induced me to prolong my ſtay: and there I met with the Swiſs ſervant, by whom I thought I could have forwarded my letter; but I was ſoon taught how precarious was any reliance of that ſort. My acquaintance ſuddenly diſappeared, without coming for my letter, and I had reaſon to believe, that it would be prudent to remove to a greater diſtance from Paris, which I forthwith ſet about.

"Since that, nothing worth noticing has befallen your itinerant brother; but, with redoubled eagerneſs, his ſoul thirſts for news from England.—Ah! my Lucy,

beſides that dear, dear group, is there a kind, a benevolent heart intereſted in the deſtiny of Marchmont? I dare not truſt myſelf on the ſubject, and now haſtily I muſt bid you adieu!—for an occaſion offers of ſending my letter without any hazard to myſelf, or to him who conveys it.—Let it aſſure you, my ever-loved Lucy, of my ſafety, and of the tender attachment of

"Your

"E—— A—— M——.

"If I am not greatly deceived, I ſhall have better opportunities ſoon of writing to you, and, I hope, news of poor Lavergnac that will be acceptable to you.—Heaven preſerve you all!"

In breathleſs agitation, Althea hurried over this letter. Hardly had ſhe finiſhed it, when Lady Dacres ſent to beg

beg ſhe might ſpeak with her; and trembling, as if ſhe believed what ſhe had been reading could be gueſſed at, ſhe locked it up, and unwillingly went down to the drawing-room.

CHAP. X.

Envy and avarice counteract each other.

WHEN Althea entered the room where Lady Dacres and her family were aſſembled in their uſual formal circle, ſhe found the lady ſpeaking to her auditors on the future projects for paſſing all that remained of what is generally called ſummer. And turning in her cold and ſolemn way to Althea, ſhe ſaid,

"You will not be ſurpriſed, Miſs Dacres, at my having changed my mind as to the place I intended going to. In

my unhappy ſituation it is difficult to decide.—Alas! I ſhall carry with me the cauſe of ſadneſs wherever I go!"

Lady Dacres could not weep, but ſhe did her beſt to give what ſhe ſaid the ſame effect as if it had been accompanied by tears. The governeſs and the young ladies re-echoed back the deep ſigh with which the ſentence ended.—A dead pauſe enſued, for Althea had nothing to reply. Lady Dacres ſlowly proceeded:

"I find myſelf quite unequal to the ſort of buſtle which one muſt be ſubjected to in a public place—yet I cannot indeed go to Capelſtoke. Heaven only knows whether I ſhall ever prevail on myſelf to reviſit that once favourite ſpot!"

Another deep ſigh and another long ſilence again intervened, during which Althea had time to gueſs whither all this prelude tended; and it was not difficult to ſee that the ſcheme of getting her

away, which for ſome reaſon or other had been ſuſpended, was again reſumed. Nothing could be more agreeable to her preſent views, and her heart beat quick leſt ſhe ſhould be miſtaken as to her mother-in-law's meaning. Another ſentence, however, ſerved to put her out of ſuſpenſe.

"Now," continued ſhe, "the thing is this—I have had a letter from my dear friend Mrs. Fordham——an unhappy widow like myſelf, who about a year before I loſt the beſt of men followed good Mr. Fordham to the grave! and has never recovered herſelf ſince, poor woman!—for ſhe is of a moſt tender and affectionate diſpoſition. God knows how melancholy a viſit it will be to me, and how unwilling I am to take any young perſons into a houſe, which to be ſure muſt be very bad, and quite depreſſing to *their* ſpirits; though, as to my own, it is quite that ſort of place fit for unhappy *me!* My good and kind friend indeed wiſhed

wiſhed me to take Caroline with me, as her houſe, though ſmall, could accommodate us two; and I ſhall of ſervants only have Midgely and Richard; for as to my horſes I ſhall ſend them to Capelſtoke.—Now the difficulty is . . . . .'

Here an uncertainty how ſhe ſhould beſt word what ſhe had to ſay gave Althea an opportunity of interpoſing:

" If your Ladyſhip has any difficulty as to how *I* ſhall diſpoſe of myſelf, I beg leave immediately to remove it. I wiſh very much to viſit the family of . . . . ."

A conſciouſneſs of her partiality for Marchmont, and that it was of his family ſhe was ſpeaking, made her bluſh and heſitate. Lady Dacres looked at her, but it was merely with earneſtneſs occaſioned by fluctuating avarice: for at that moment, on hearing ſhe had a friend to whom ſhe wiſhed to go, a debate aroſe, whether it would not be more politic to ſuffer her daughter-in-law to remain, at whatever inconvenience, in her

own houſe. While ſhe deliberated, Althea made two or three attempts to ſpeak; but ſhe dreaded leſt Lady Dacres ſhould enquire with whom ſhe meant to reſide, and that, being compelled to name the Marchmonts, ſhe ſhould receive a prohibition againſt going to them. Lady Dacres, however, who could not determine to invite her heartily to Capelſtoke, ſaid,

"Now, as I was going to ſay, the difficulty is, that to be ſure, Miſs Dacres, Capelſtoke can in no way be agreeable to you: it is extremely dull at all times; and now that the former dear maſter of it is gone, and my ſon not in England, to be ſure every thing muſt wear a moſt gloomy aſpect; and I was thinking how, unleſs indeed it could be *made* any ways agreeable to you....."

"I have no apprehenſion of ſolitude, Madam," interrupted Althea. "Indeed," added ſhe, ſmiling, "after having ſo long lived at Eaſtwoodleigh,

an

an inhabited houſe like Capelſtoke, were it not for thoſe recollections your Ladyſhip ſpeaks of, would be comparatively cheerful."

Lady Dacres made the ſort of motion with her lips and eyes, which thoſe who were accuſtomed to her knew was a certain ſymptom of her being diſpleaſed. Althea well underſtood it; and ſorry that any thing ſhe had ſaid might be interpreted into a reflection on her ſtepmother's former conduct, ſhe would have recalled, or palliated her unlucky ſpeech: but it was too late. So great had always been the diſlike which lay lurking in the mind of this malignant woman, that a trifle, however unintended or immaterial, was always enough to raiſe it into ſomething like averſion.

Her naturally unpleaſing countenance now ſcowled upon Althea, with an expreſſion that made her tremble: then, as if checking herſelf by a painful effort, ſhe ſcrewed her face into ſomething that reſembled

reſembled ſullenly ſtifled revenge; while toſſing up her head, and ſpeaking through her noſe, ſhe ſaid,

"Unhappily, Miſs Dacres, Sir Audley found, as indeed has ſince been but too evident, the caſe . . . . ."

"Dear Lady Dacres," ſaid Althea, dreading whither her ſudden ill-humour would carry her, "I beg your pardon, if any thing I have inadvertently ſaid has been improper. I had not the ſmalleſt intention of recalling paſt events—I merely meant to ſay, that in conſequence of my being long, indeed for the greateſt part of my life, accuſtomed to it, I have no dread of ſecluſion of any kind; and that, whatever may be my own wiſhes, if my accompanying to Capelſtoke the younger part of your Ladyſhip's family would be of any uſe . . ."

She was proceeding, when the governeſs, who ſaw by the manner of the lady of the houſe how far ſhe might go, interrupted Althea.

"Of

"Of uſe, Ma'am? I'm ſure my Lady will not do me ſo little juſtice as to believe I ſhall want *any body's* aſſiſtance in the care of my ſweet young charges, while her Ladyſhip's diſtreſſed ſtate of ſpirits compels her to be away from them.—No, indeed . . . . . if my Lady thinks, as I am ſure I hope ſhe does, that ſhe may rely on . . . . . "

Althea now believing this was a concerted plan to quarrel with and get rid of her, and rather rejoicing at than regretting a circumſtance which would, ſhe hoped, releaſe her at once to purſue her plan of reſiding with Mrs. Marchmont, interrupted in her turn the eloquent ſpeaker, and ſaid in a reſolute though calm way to Lady Dacres,

"It is not, Madam, difficult for me to underſtand the meaning of all this. I am afraid I have long been thought a burden to your Ladyſhip; I am ſure I am conſidered as ſuch now.—It is time, therefore, to relieve you. Be aſſured,

Madam,

Madam, that in quitting your houſe I leave it with my beſt wiſhes for you and your children ..... and ſhall conſider it as one of the happieſt circumſtances of my life, if at any future time I may be allowed to teſtify to them my friendſhip and regard."

Then, fearful that ſhe could truſt her voice no longer, Althea hurried to her own room—but when ſhe arrived there the tumult of her mind overcame her, and ſhe burſt into tears.

The point was now ſhe thought decided, and decided juſt as ſhe had wiſhed; ſo far as that ſhe was left at liberty to go unqueſtioned whitherſoever ſhe would. Yet the rude unfeelingneſs of Lady Dacres, which her imagination already exaggerated, ſhocked and mortified her. Nor was that alone a ſource of diſquiet; for, when able to think with more calmneſs, ſhe recollected that ſhe was thus diſmiſſed from preſent protection, without being ſure ſhe ſhould find another,

another, for whether Mrs. Marchmont would receive her was extremely uncertain. Her former coldneſs, the diſtance ſhe had kept by withdrawing continually from her advances, and even the *manner* of Lucy Marchmont when ſhe ſpoke of her mother, all immediately returned to the memory of Althea, ſerving to torment her with apprehenſions that the aſylum ſhe ſo anxiouſly deſired to find would be ſhut againſt her.

Determined, however, to remove from the houſe of Lady Dacres, in which ſhe thought the very dependents commiſſioned to inſult her, ſhe determined, if Mrs. Marchmont ſhould have any reaſons for not receiving her, to find ſome place in the country, where ſhe might board in the entire ſecluſion, which, if ſhe could not aſſociate with the Marchmont family, was her ſole wiſh.

Of Lady Dacres ſhe did not expect to hear again—and unpleaſant as had been many ſituations of her former life, ſhe thought

thought her preſent ſtate the moſt comfortleſs ſhe had yet experienced; for ſhe fancied that even the trifling ſervices of the domeſtics were performed with reluctance, and every hour her reſidence became more uneaſy to her. The miſtreſs of it was preparing for her removal—the ſervants were running about all day on commiſſions, and ſcarcely had time to bring into a ſmall dreſſing-room Althea's breakfaſt and dinner; for now the meſſage of the morning that uſed to ſalute her on the firſt weeks of her arrival was again reſorted to; and every day it was formally announced, with *her Ladyſhip's compliments, that her Ladyſhip was too unwell to dine in company.*——To which Althea as conſtantly anſwered, that "ſhe was very ſorry, and begged leave to dine in the dreſſing-room."

So paſſed three or four days, during which ſhe had copied, and returned to Lucy her brother's letter—and waited in great perturbation of mind for that which

which was to be expected from Margate. On the laſt of theſe days ſhe learned from the ſervants that the journey of Lady Dacres's family to Capelſtoke was fixed for the next, and that ſhe herſelf and her eldeſt daughter were to remain only another day after them. Something, therefore, muſt be determined upon immediately on the part of Althea, and the ſilence of Lucy Marchmont became every moment more diſtreſſing.

At length one of the ſervants announced "a young lady," and Althea ſaw her beloved Lucy enter the room. Pleaſure lightened up her animated countenance, and in the half-breathleſs agitation of joy ſhe ſaid—"My dear Miſs Dacres, I am the happieſt creature in the world. We have news of my brother from Toulon, which is, you know, in poſſeſſion of the Engliſh—he is well, and has been of the greateſt ſervice to the poor old Baron. Neither of them is in danger any longer. I know

know not when I have received ſo cheerful a letter from my mother as that in which ſhe related to me theſe tidings, and in which Amelia encloſed me part of Armyn's letter—for, as he had an opportunity of ſending it to England by a private hand, and it contained only good news, it was delivered immediately to my mother.——My deareſt Miſs Dacres, do not imagine that, amidſt the very unuſual happineſs that this intelligence has conferred on us, we are capable of forgetting, for a moment, the kind, the generous, the delightful propoſal which you ordered me to make to my mother."

Althea, happy even beyond what ſhe dared to avow, at the ſafety of Marchmont, waited in eager and breathleſs expectation for his mother's anſwer, whoſe conſent to her propoſal was now more neceſſary than ever. Lucy was as much agitated, and was obliged to take time, to ſit down and compoſe herſelf a moment,

moment, before, drawing her mother's letter from her pocket, ſhe read to Althea the part that related to her.

LETTER.

"It would be difficult for me, my Lucy, to expreſs to you how much the generous and unexpected propoſal of Miſs Dacres delights and diſtreſſes me. That you are charmed with her, I can eaſily believe; for in my mind, (which cannot have been prejudiced by perſonal beauty, ſince I never ſaw her) her character excites a ſenſation totally unlike what I ever felt for any other perſon. I cannot, however, deſcribe this impreſſion. You know, where my heart is deeply concerned I do not readily command either my pen or my words.

"Alas! my dear girl, has this admirable young woman well conſidered what ſhe offers, when ſhe thinks of becoming an inmate of our houſe, circumſtanced as we now are? Has ſhe weighed the difference between the eaſy affluence

affluence in which ſhe has hitherto lived, and the ſtraitened circumſtances with which I and my poor girls muſt ſtruggle? Conſidering her only as a lodger, ought Miſs Dacres to lodge in a ſhop? As a friend, ought ſhe to aſſociate with thoſe who are about to keep one?

"She has greatneſs of mind enough to conſider us rather as what we were, than as what we are—to believe that by an exertion made neceſſary by no fault of our own we are not degraded—— But, will the world think ſo?—And at her age, has Miſs Dacres, who ought from birth, from accompliſhments, from perſonal perfections, to have that world at her feet, will ſhe be content to brave its opinion?—I know how much ſo exalted a mind as hers is capable of ſacrificing to friendſhip—but on her friendſhip what claims have we?—people hardly known to her longer than yeſterday, unleſs it be by name. Why

ſhould

ſhould ſhe deſcend from her ſtation for us? I cannot bear that, miſled by the enthuſiaſm of youthful generoſity, ſhe ſhould put herſelf into a ſituation ſhe may afterwards repent.—Think not becauſe I ſay this, that I am too proud to receive from ſuch hands an obligation; for an obligation I know ſhe intends it to be, and an obligation I ſhould aſſuredly conſider it. No, my Lucy: amidſt all the ſevere mortifications I have ſuffered, amidſt all my efforts to ſubmit to the ſad difference of fortune, of which ſo many have made me feel all the bitterneſs, I have never ſhrunk from the kindneſs of the truly generous. Why muſt I add, that my ſubmiſſion in this reſpect to receive favours has not been put to many proofs?—Ah, my child! thoſe who are, like you, ſetting out in life, even under the inauſpicious influence of family depreſſion, can yet form no idea of the cruel, the accumulated convictions of the ſelfiſhneſs

and

and unfeelingneſs of the world that *I* have ſeen, ſince the hour when your dear father's pecuniary circumſtances began to decline. Wonder not, therefore, that the unexampled inſtance of Miſs Dacres's benevolent wiſhes to become a reſident in my family ſhould excite my ſurpriſe, as well as my admiration and gratitude.

If, after ſhe has duly reflected on the great difference ſhe muſt find between ſuch a table, ſuch a manner of living as we have adopted, and that to which ſhe muſt always have been accuſtomed; if ſhe can voluntarily deſcend from the conveniencies of Lady Dacres's eſtabliſhment, to two maids, or rather one and a girl—to reſide with a family ſtruggling with, I truſt, unmerited adverſity—oh! greatly indeed will it be in her power to alleviate the hardſhips of their fate—leſs from that pecuniary aſſiſtance ſhe ſo generouſly offers, uſeful as it muſt be, than from the ſoothing comfort it will

will afford me, to think that I am conſidered as worthy of a charge ſo precious; that my Amelia and my Lucy are worthy of ſuch a friend; and that, in addition to their example, my Millicente will have before her ſuch an example of all that a young perſon ought to be.

"Go then, Lucy, to this amiable Miſs Dacres—tell her what I ſay, and repreſent our ſituation exactly as it is; and, if you find her ſtill diſpoſed to make us happy, arrange with her every thing for your immediate journey hither, where I think I ſhall ſtay till my ſon returns to England. The ſeaſon is now ſo far advanced, that I know not whether our project can be carried into execution with any proſpect of ſucceſs. My timidity, the repulſes I have met with, the ſuperior advantages of competitors regularly ſettled in the buſineſs, and my renewed doubts of Marchmont's cheerful acquieſcence, have lately concurred

to ſhake my reſolution. I know that the irreſolute do nothing well—but how can I be ſanguine?—How indeed can I urge my mind to any ſteady exertion? There are times when it ſinks into abſolute imbecility, when I ſit whole days unoccupied, unfitted for occupation, and, by dwelling too much on the paſt, embitter the preſent, and have no longer any courage to look ſteadily towards the future. My poor Amelia partakes but too much of my languor—we want your animating preſence, my Lucy, and the innocent cheerfulneſs of my little Milly. If, added to theſe, you can bring to us the ſenſe and poliſhed ſweetneſs of your incomparable friend, I ſhall ſurely regain ſome portion of tranquillity; for Armyn is ſafe. He has, in proſpect, advantages which, though he does not explain them, promiſe much, I am ſure, from his ſanguine manner of ſpeaking of them. Perhaps the heavy tide of calamity, that has ſo long run againſt

againſt us, is turning—I may yet ſee my children happy, and in peace rejoin their father."

The voice of Lucy Marchmont trembled as ſhe concluded this part of her mother's letter: yet it contained, in general, nothing but what gave pleaſure to her and to her friend, who was not only delighted and ſurpriſed to find Mrs. Marchmont ſo different from the idea ſhe had formed of her, but, as ſhe believed, all her difficulties removed, and herſelf ſecure of being joyfully received as a reſident in their houſe, by the perſons whom ſhe moſt deſired to conſider as her friends—whoſe ideas and manners ſeemed moſt accordant to her own.

Very little time, however, remained for the two young friends to conſult on the journey they were equally eager to undertake; for Lucy Marchmont was to return to Fulham, as ſhe had come from thence in a ſtage. It was the firſt time

in her life that ſhe had ever been in ſuch a conveyance alone; and though naturally fearleſs, and never indulging thoſe ridiculous perſonal apprehenſions which the remarkably plain are much more apt to expreſs than the young and handſome, neither ſhe nor Althea could think without ſome uneaſineſs of her returning in a ſtage at a late hour.

Inſtead, therefore, of allowing themſelves to diſcuſs thoſe future plans, which now ſeemed ſo flattering to them both, they haſtened to agree on that which was immediately neceſſary. Althea, who had no doubt but that it was perfectly indifferent to Lady Dacres whither ſhe went provided ſhe did go, concluded to ſend her Ladyſhip a note early on the following morning to name her intentions, and requeſt her to pay whatever might become due to her to Mr. Booth, a gentleman in London (whom Lucy Marchmont had named as her mother's friend, for Althea herſelf knew

knew nobody); and that as her clothes, moſt of which, on account of her mourning, ſhe had never unpacked, would be ſoon ready, ſhe would ſend them off for the Margate waggon early, and be herſelf ready at two o'clock in a poſt-chaiſe to fetch the two Miſs Marchmonts from the houſe of Mr. Booth, whither they would go by an early ſtage; and from thence they were to proceed together on their way to Margate, intending to ſleep one night on the road.

This arrangement made, Lucy Marchmont roſe to depart: but it was already duſk; and Althea could not bear to think of her walking alone to Piccadilly, where ſhe was to find the ſtage. She had ſo little authority in the houſe of Lady Dacres, that ſhe could not even direct a footman to follow her—but it occurred to her to order a hackney-coach, for which ſhe ſent the maid who uſually waited in her room. But ſtill not ſatisfied for the ſafety of a lovely girl,

whom ſhe thought too young and pretty not to be liable to many unpleaſant adventures, ſhe determined to go with her herſelf. Together then they went out, and fortunately reached the ſtand a moment before the Fulham ſtage was to ſet off. Althea found there were only women in it, and ſaw her fair friend depart without any fear, and with a gay heart, in expectation of their meeting the next day to part no more.

Althea, happier than ſhe had ever been ſince the death of her aunt, returned in the hack to Groſvenor-ſtreet, and no ſooner re-entered her own room, than ſhe ſat down to write to Lady Dacres the note ſhe had meditated; a taſk which was by no means ſo eaſy as ſhe had imagined. Doubts now aroſe, whether, if ſhe named the Marchmont family as that with which ſhe meant to fix her reſidence, Lady Dacres, whoſe unaccountable averſion to them ſhe well knew, might ſo eaſily acquieſce as ſhe had

had reaſon to believe ſhe would, in regard to almoſt any other perſons with whom ſhe might chooſe to place herſelf. Yet to give a falſe name, to miſrepreſent her intention, was what ſhe could not bring herſelf to do; ſo remote from her diſpoſition and her principles was every ſpecies of deceit.

A middle way, however, ſeemed to offer itſelf; and though even to temporiſe was unpleaſant to her, Althea thought that the little conſideration ſhewn to her by Lady Dacres, demanded leſs candour, on her part, than ſhe ought and was willing to ſhew towards every being who either really felt, or thought it worth while to teſtify, any intereſt in her affairs or any ſolicitude for her welfare.—In purſuance of this idea, ſhe wrote as follows:

"MADAM,

"After the intimation received from your Ladyſhip, and my knowledge of

the preparations that are making for your family's immediate removal, I imagine it will be agreeable to your Ladyſhip to know, that I ſhall not intrude upon you in Groſvenor-ſtreet, or at any other of your reſidences, having ſettled to go to the houſe of a friend, who is ſo good as to receive me as the companion of her daughters: but as the circumſtances of the family are not ſuch as can authoriſe my availing myſelf of their friendſhip to add to their expence, I truſt your Ladyſhip will have the goodneſs to arrange the little money matters I have, in ſuch a way as may enable me to pay half-yearly for my board during my ſtay. I beg leave at the ſame time to aſſure you, Madam, that ſhould it at any future period be in my power to render to my brothers and ſiſters any ſervice, or to your Ladyſhip any ſatisfaction, I ſhall have great pleaſure in returning to your houſe, in every manner to teſtify how much I

deſire

deſire to convince your Ladyſhip of the reſpect and good wiſhes of,

" Madam,

" Your moſt obedient

" humble ſervant,

" ALTHEA DACRES.

" Groſvenor-Street,

" Sept. 5th."

This letter was given to the houſe-maid, who waited generally in her chamber, with orders to ſend it by Lady Dacres's woman as ſoon as her Lady aroſe in the morning.

Though this was never very ſoon, Althea was unable to remain in bed after a very early hour. Her packing ſerved to occupy ſome part of this tedious interval: the trunks being ready, ſhe directed them, and, ordering a porter, ſent them to the waggon, writing on them, " To be left at the Warehouſe at Margate till called for."—They had not long been diſpatched, be-

fore the maid brought her the following letter:

"MADAM,

"I am, I muſt own, rather ſurpriſed at your note, and could have wiſhed you had informed me of the name of the perſons you are a-going to put yourſelf under the care of. I can't but ſay I think it might have been more proper if you had thought fit to conſult me thereon; but I dare to ſay it is no intention of yeſterday, but intended ſome time. At the ſame time I am free to ſay, I think your conduct in my houſe might have been more prudently regulated. Indeed it is not very diſcreet to receive viſits from one hardly knows who, and to go in hackney-coaches at a late hour of the evening.—In regard to what you mention farther, I muſt obſerve to you, Miſs Althea, that if it is not agreeable to you to remain yourſelf under my care, the will of

of my dear Sir Audley has entruſted me with your ſmall fortune, at leaſt till ſuch time as you are of age; wherefore I hold it a point of duty to prevent your placing *that* at leaſt in improper hands. If you have any doubts of my right to do this, you will give me leave to refer you to the other executor, Mr. Mohun, who doubtleſs will, as a lawyer, ſatisfy you of the propriety of this. In regard to the little ſum of money left you by your aunt, I have nothing to ſay to that: but, though you have little right to expect advice from me, and I dare to ſay will not follow it, you will excuſe my taking this opportunity to warn you againſt the artfulneſs of that family of the Marchmonts that you are going to; for they are entirely beggars, and only intend to make a prey of you. It is pity but what you could have made your mind up, to remain in the care your good father left you in. However, I have done my duty, and waſh my hands of

the affair. Certainly nobody can blame me, if you chooſe to throw yourſelf away, and let yourſelf down. I am truly ſorry, for the ſake of thoſe that you belonged to, and, on their account, ſincerely wiſh you may not repent what you are a-going to do, when it will be too late.—I am ſo much indiſpoſed, that it is very inconvenient to me to be obliged to write ſuch long letters.—However,

"I am, Madam, ſtill
"Your well-wiſher and ſervant,
"MARY DACRES."

Nothing ſhort of an abſolute prohibition to leave the houſe could have given Althea more concern and aſtoniſhment than this letter. That Lady Dacres ſhould know to whom ſhe was going, and judge ſo hardly of the lovely and innocent Lucy, were equally ſubjects of wonder. That ſhe ſhould mean, as the letter certainly intimated, to detain

tain the intereſt of her fortune, ſave only the part left by her aunt (which did not amount to a thouſand pounds), was a ſource of the acuteſt concern—for from the intereſt of that it was impoſſible for her to make to the family ſhe was going to reſide with, ſuch a compenſation as would ſatisfy her own liberal ſentiment, or be of that uſe to them which was, above all other things, her wiſh.

Struck with this reflection, and extremely diſtreſſed and ſhocked at the reference to Mohun, whoſe odious name ſhe had hardly heard mentioned before ſince her father's death, Althea now heſitated as to the immediate execution of the project on which ſhe had ſet her heart; and endeavoured calmly to conſider, whether to reſign it, at leaſt for the preſent, and to condemn herſelf to endure life at Capelſtoke, rather than irritate the malignant and vindictive woman in whoſe power ſhe muſt yet remain

remain two years, might not be moſt conducive to her own eaſe, and even to the welfare of the friends for whom ſhe was ſo anxious. But, on the other hand, ſhe conſidered that, by yielding thus to the capricious tyranny of her ſtep-mother, who firſt appeared deſirous of diſmiſſing her, and then ſeemed to wiſh her ſtay only to torment her, ſhe was in fact acknowledging her power not only over her fortune but her perſon. The mention of the hateful Mohun, who had already been the cauſe of ſo much uneaſineſs, alarmed and terrified her. She thought it poſſible that there was a deſign to expoſe her to pecuniary inconveniences, to mortify and oppreſs her, that the diſcomforts ſhe underwent might make the affluence and ſplendour he could offer her more readily embraced. Yet, if ſuch were the plan, it was ſtrange that Mohun had never once appeared, and that his name, unleſs by accident, had not been mentioned in her hearing

hearing ever ſince her reſidence with Lady Dacres. The mere idea, however, of being under the neceſſity of holding any converſe with him, of being in ſome meaſure in his power, filled her with dread and vexation. This poſſible aggravation of the uneaſineſs ſhe might experience in being left in the lone ſolitude of Capelſtoke, during the months of autumn too, which would ſo forcibly recall the ſcenes of a preceding year—the formal importance and overbearing impertinence of Mrs. Bentham the governeſs—and the unintereſting flippancy of her half ſiſters, girls of eleven and ten years old, who had been inſtructed not to love her—the ſenſation of dependance on Lady Dacres, and of being accounted a ſtranger and a burden in her father's houſe—all were, in her mind, placed in formidable array; while the other ſcheme offered nothing but what was attractive to her imagination, and ſoothing to her feelings.

As

As Lady Dacres offered her no plan of future life as an alternative to that ſhe oppoſed—as ſhe had even confeſſed her difficulties how to diſpoſe of her daughter-in-law, and now ſo ſuddenly diſcovered that the habitation ſhe had choſen was improper, though ſhe propoſed no other—every motive of duty ſeemed to be out of the queſtion, while every motive of comfort and ſatisfaction urged her to throw herſelf into the protection of Marchmont's mother. She read once more the part of her letter which Lucy had left with her; ſhe read over that ſhe had copied of Marchmont's; ſhe reflected on the pleaſure of paſſing her life with people whom ſhe loved ſo much as ſhe already loved all ſhe knew of his family; and then endeavoured with ſanguine hope to believe, that when Lady Dacres ſaw her determined, ſhe would not think of detaining ſo ſmall a ſum as her yearly income, and would be glad to be quietly releaſed

releaſed from any trouble about, or any reflections on her treatment of, a perſon ſhe did not love. With preſent money ſhe was well provided, having ſtill a great part of what ſhe had poſſeſſed at Eaſtwoodleigh; and fifty guineas ſhe had received ſince for mourning, of which ſhe had expended very little. This was a ſufficient fund for her preſent perſonal expences, and for ſuch a compliment as might be uſeful to her friends on her becoming an inmate of their houſe.—The debate ended in her writing a cold but calm letter to Lady Dacres, in which ſhe explained her reaſons for leaving her; the principal of which were, that her Ladyſhip herſelf had ſeemed to deſire it, and that from the engagements ſhe had made, in conſequence of having believed ſo, it was now impoſſible for her to recede. She added—"I am perſuaded your Ladyſhip will not think it worth while to detain the ſmall intereſt of my fortune; and I have only to repeat,

peat, that whenever I am recalled with kindneſs I ſhall return to your protection with pleaſure."

Having done this, and left among the ſervants ſome tokens of her generoſity, ſhe got into a hackney coach, and ſoon found herſelf at the place where Lucy and Milly Marchmont were impatiently waiting for her. From thence a poſt-chaiſe conveyed them rapidly on the Kentiſh road; and Althea, notwithſtanding her habits of reaſoning and reflecting on every circumſtance of her life, almoſt forgot all her recent uneaſineſs in the delight of ſeeing the happineſs ſhe beſtowed on her companions.

CHAP. XI.

Whither thou goeſt I will go; and where thou lodgeſt I will lodge.

IF the journey was delightful to Althea from happineſs poſſeſſed and reflected, its cloſe awakened all her ſenſibility. The meeting of the mother and the daughters, of the eldeſt ſiſter and the two who now rejoined her, was a ſcene that drew tears from Althea; but, like thoſe of the immediate actors, they were tears of pleaſure. The reception Mrs. Marchmont gave to her viſitor was full of dignified gratitude. And ſo different were the perſon and manners of Mrs.

Mrs. Marchmont from thoſe which Althea had imagined, that ſhe could never ceaſe wondering at the falſe ideas ſhe had formed, nor rejoicing that for once the reality was infinitely more intereſting than the imaginary ſemblance.

Mrs. Marchmont, who had been remarkable for an uncommon ſhare of perſonal beauty, was ſtill more than a fine ruin. It is the privilege of ſome faces to gain in expreſſion what they loſe in bloom. On that of Mrs. Marchmont ſorrow ſeemed to have laid its blighting hand; but the traces were ſo ſoftened by reſignation and reaſon, that, had it been neceſſary to perſonify mildneſs and fortitude united in one form, ſhe might have ſat for the picture. And this expreſſion her countenance ſeldom loſt, unleſs when her ſon was in queſtion. So paſſionately fond was ſhe of him, and ſo much had ſhe ſuffered from continual fears for his ſafety, that, whenever he was named, her feelings became evi-

dently

dently moſt acute. She at preſent believed him in ſafety; and the apparent tranquillity, which was often a mere effort of reſolution, was now the effect of that perſuaſion.

In a few days Althea found herſelf perfectly at eaſe with her; the little arrangements of the family were made—and every day ſhe ſaw more reaſon to rejoice in having made this choice; for the taſte, the temper and manners of the mother and the daughters ſo exactly coincided with her own, that, having never ſince the death of Mrs. Trevyllian paſſed one hour of ſatisfaction, ſhe ſeemed ſuddenly to have regained faculties that had long been repreſſed. Her charming talents and her charming temper occaſionally regained their early brilliancy. Yet there was ſtill much occaſion for fortitude; for many trials were threatened to the latter by Lady Dacres, to whom, within a month after her being ſettled at Margate, ſhe again wrote

wrote very reſpectfully on the ſubject of her intereſt money, which would become due in October. Lady Dacres, as if enraged at Althea's having taken the very meaſure to which ſhe was conſcious ſhe had herſelf driven her, referred her in a very rude letter to her attorney and Mr. Mohun. "She left," ſhe ſaid, "her part of the buſineſs to the ſolicitor employed by her late dear huſband, who adviſed her againſt paying any thing for a purpoſe ſo contrary to his will;" and then, in her uſual hypocritical ſtyle, added, "You will excuſe me, Miſs Dacres, if I deſire you will pleaſe to refer yourſelf altogether to him; for, to ſay the truth, my ſpirits are ſo much affected by the indiſcreet and improper conduct of a perſon ſo nearly related to my dear, ever dear Sir Audley, that care for my own health, not for my own ſake indeed, but for that of the precious pledges he has left me, demands of me that

that I decline a correſpondence ſo diſtreſſing to my ſenſibility."

Althea, though already of ſome experience, had not yet ſeen the farce of The World played long enough to read without a ſudden emotion of indignation this fulſome cant, adopted to colour purpoſes ſo unjuſt and cruel. From her knowledge of Vampyre, and another wretch of the ſame deſcription, of whom ſhe had occaſionally heard anecdotes, ſhe deteſted the very name of an attorney, and ſhe could not determine, at leaſt till the laſt moment, to apply to one; ſtill leſs to addreſs herſelf on any account to Mr. Mohun.

Althea, on weighing all theſe circumſtances, thought it more neceſſary than ever to promote the little plan of induſtry which had been thought of when firſt ſhe made overtures for reſiding with the Marchmonts, but which now ſeemed to languiſh, and to be only partially executed.

Mrs.

Mrs. Marchmont, notwithſtanding her acquired fortitude, and the reſolution ſhe ſeemed to have wrought herſelf up to, found her firmneſs recoil before the mortifications to which even the ſlight eſſay ſhe had conſented to expoſed her. During the very height of the ſeaſon nobody thought much of the intimations that were occaſionally given by two or three ladies, lovers of the minor branches of the fine arts, that the Miſs Marchmonts, poor things! had ſome little elegant articles of their own ingenious works, which their ſituation made it convenient to diſpoſe of. The raffle of the morning, the public breakfaſt, the ball, or the play, with the neceſſary attention to changes of dreſs, and conſultations on the moſt fantaſtic way of diſguiſing the human form, engroſſed every woman, from thoſe of the waſtly genteel famully who hired a glaſs coach for a month, to elegant leaders of faſhion, that look down on *them* with as much

ſcorn

ſcorn as on the importations of the ſtages and hoys.

But when the concourſe began a little to decline, as was the caſe ſoon after Althea's arrival, it now and then happened that idleneſs, or curioſity, under the ſemblance of benevolence, procured to the little repoſitory viſits, which, ſeldom producing any advantage, gave more ſenſations of humiliation to Mrs. Marchmont than almoſt any advantage could have repaid her for.

Amelia Marchmont, naturally of a reſerved though gentle temper, who had been brought up with the ſame ideas that from his family prejudices had influenced the conduct and life of her father, could ill endure the contumely that in her opinion was annexed to that neceſſity which now induced her family to avail themſelves of talents acquired for amuſement, to contribute to their ſupport.—She therefore timidly, and yet with feelings half indignant, retired from no-

tice when it was unavoidably attracted, as it ſometimes was, by thoſe who, without any feeling for the reduced circumſtances of the perſons to whom they ſpoke, treated them as they would the tradeſpeople they commonly dealt with, or ſometimes even with leſs ceremony; at others, mingling in their manner that ſort of half kindneſs which is affected by little minds towards the objects of their charity.

Amelia Marchmont, therefore, after a trial or two never appeared; but Lucy, who had at an earlier period of life learned the neceſſity there was for combating the pride of family, ſo importunately uneaſy to the poor, who from the quickneſs of her obſervation often ſaw more to pity than envy in the idle and ignorant children of unenjoyed proſperity, and who felt all the conſcious ſuperiority of talents and underſtanding, ſometimes was even amuſed with the applications from which her

ſiſter ſhrunk with diſguſt. The name of Marchmont was little known in a part of England ſo remote from the weſtern county where it had ſo long flouriſhed: and of its hiſtorical honours few were aware, and none appeared to conſider them. They were looked upon merely as the widow and daughters of an indigent gentleman compelled to deſcend from their former ſtation in ſociety to procure a ſubſiſtence; and of ſuch ſo many examples had occurred within a few years, that the attraction of novelty was not added to the claims of compaſſion.

It ſoon, however, began to be whiſpered, that aſſociated with this family, and taking a part in their labours, was a baronet's daughter. This circumſtance, firſt hinted by the ſervants, who found their pride gratified by divulging it, was ſoon enlarged into a little hiſtory, which accumulating anecdotes from every mouth it paſſed through, at length

gave a grave detail of "a young lady, the daughter of a titled man, who was extremely beautiful, would be poſſeſſed of a conſiderable fortune when ſhe came of age, and was very highly accompliſhed; who had moſt unaccountably determined to quit her own reſpectable family, and live with theſe Marchmonts."—It followed, that ſome undue arts muſt have been uſed on their part to induce a young woman of faſhion to adopt ſo ſtrange a reſolution; and the conduct of Mrs. Marchmont and her daughters began to be canvaſſed with all the malignant impertinence which ignorance, and a deſire to find the unfortunate to blame, generate amidſt what is called the *ſociable* parties of a place of public reſort. That the purity of female friendſhip ſhould have influenced Althea to take ſuch a ſtep, ſoon began to be conſidered as extremely improbable; and, on farther enquiry, it was diſcovered that

that Mrs. Marchmont had a ſon. A day or two afterwards it was known, that this ſon had abſconded for debt. The debts were next aſſerted to have been contracted by his own extravagance; and, in a ſhort time afterwards, Marchmont was transformed into a gameſter, who had broken his father's heart—and Althea into an irregular-minded and ungovernable young woman, who had quitted the matronly protection of her father's widow, to aſſociate herſelf, on the account of young Marchmont, with the fallen fortunes of his deſigning mother and inſinuating ſiſters.

Theſe reports, or rather romances, were ſo far from deterring the amiable inventors and propagators of them from viſiting the parties, that they raiſed great curioſity, and it ſoon became a ſort of faſhion to call at the houſe in the expectation of ſeeing this indiſcreet young woman of faſhion; and though the cu-

riosity (which Althea was at first far from suspecting) was seldom or never gratified, much continued to be told of her attractions, and to be invented of her motives for the extraordinary sacrifice she was supposed to make.

At length she was one morning desired to go down into the parlour to speak to a lady, who came, as the maid who delivered the message said, in the *sweetest, most genteelest carriage* that ever she seed, with a pair of dappul grey hosses, with long tails tied up in knots! Althea, who was not much dazzled by this description, desired the favour of the Lady's name. It was Mrs. Glaston—and Althea went to receive her old friend, metamorphosed into a finer lady than she appeared even on their first meeting after her marriage.

When the first common forms were over—"Lord! my dear!" said Mrs. Glaston, "you can't think how I was surprised to hear of you here!"

"Were

"Were you?" anſwered Althea.—"Why ſo?"

"Dear! Why, becauſe you know it is ſuch an odd thing.—I told the people that talked to me about it, that I was ſure it muſt be ſome miſtake; but they inſiſted upon it, it was you—and then you can't think, my dear friend, what odd things they have got into their heads. Why, do you know? they ſay you are in love with young Marchmont. A likely ſtory indeed!—I told them, ſays I, to my certain knowledge, that's *quite* impoſſible; for, ſays I, *I* ought to know, who was ſo well acquainted with Miſs Dacres formerly; and I'm ſure 'tis no ſuch thing. Lord! I dare ſay ſhe hardly knows the man, ſays I; and you've no notion, beſides, what a grave, formal, half-alive ſort of a man he is. I'm ſure, ſays I, I remember well enough when he was a friend of my brother's; he uſed to be in our houſe ſometimes for a week to-

gether; and as to a ſmart young man, though he is not ugly, yet ſomehow he is juſt as ſtupid as the picture of his great grandfather walked out of its frame.—I mean the picture my brother bought at the ſale there at the old cathedral place, when all went to pieces; that great frightful figure, in a ruff and jack boots, enough to fright one into fits, that my brother, from ſome ſtrange whim, ſets ſuch prodigious ſtore by. But as for being gay and amuſing one, and talking pretty ſort of ſmall talk, like other men of his age, Marchmont has no more notion of it than the picture itſelf; and therefore I'm ſure Miſs Dacres, who I don't believe ever ſaw him twice in her life, is no more in love with him . . . . than—than . . . . ſhe would be with the Pope, or any odd old quiz one can name."

Fortunately for Althea, the loquacious lady was ſo occupied by herſelf, and had ſuch pleaſure in hearing the

ſound

ſound of her own voice, while ſhe contemplated the graceful play of her feathers, as ſhe ſaw them in an oppoſite glaſs, that ſhe had not either at the beginning or cloſe of this harangue looked in the face of the perſon ſhe was talking to. Twice the blood had riſen to the betraying cheeks of Althea; the laſt time it had hardly receded back to her palpitating heart, when Mrs. Glaſton, having no more to add, turned towards her, and, obſerving ſomething very unuſual in her look, hardly had fixed her eyes attentively upon her before ſhe became of a deadly pale.

"Lord! my dear!" cried the thoughtleſs creature, "I hope I have not been telling lies all this while about you.—Bleſs me! what is the matter?—Why, you don't know young Marchmont, do you? 'Twa'n't upon his account, was it, that you left Lady Dacres, and came here to keep ſhop with his mother and ſiſters?"

"Upon *his* account!" faintly articulated Althea. Then making an effort to recover the calm feelings of conſcious rectitude, and to recollect of how little conſequence were the idle remarks of people for whoſe opinions ſhe felt ſo little reſpect, ſhe forced a ſmile, and ſaid—"How can you, dear Mrs. Glaſton, liſten to, or beſtow another thought on, theſe legends? For Heaven's ſake, what have the people who ſay all this to do with me, or I with them? I came hither becauſe the manners of this family were agreeable to me; I aſk not the approbation of ſtrangers, ſince ſtrangers cannot judge of my motives; I never interfere in *their* concerns; would they could be prevailed upon to allow me the management of my own!"

"Well, but, my dear," cried Mrs. Glaſton, returning to the charge, "you know it is quite impoſſible to ſtop people's tongues—and to be ſure I can't help

help thinking it ſtrange, you ſhould like Mrs. Marchmont. Lord! I remember, when I was quite a child, I uſed to go there to ſtay ſometimes with grandmama, and I hated it ſo! The miſſes, inſtead of playing and romping, uſed to be ſhewing me books and pictures, and telling ſtories about them, eſpecially Miſs Marchmont the eldeſt; a prim thing—and as for their mother . . . . "

"She is one of the beſt of women," ſaid Althea, who found ſhe could not hear without impatience any reflections on her friends, even from the inſignificant tongue of folly.—"She is one of the beſt of women, and her underſtanding is as good as her heart."

"I am ſure I remember that ſhe was reckoned very proud though," eagerly interrupted Mrs. Glaſton—"and that is not, I ſuppoſe, counted a ſign of great ſenſe, eſpecially where people are ſo poor."

"Mrs. Marchmont was, for a great while, extremely unhappy," replied Althea; "and it is not eaſy for mere viſiting acquaintance to diſtinguiſh between dejection and haughtineſs: but I believe there is little uſe in our diſcuſſing, at this time, the opinions of people ſix or ſeven years ago, and at two hundred miles diſtance from hence."

"Perhaps you don't care, neither, for what the people ſay here at this preſent time?" ſaid Mrs. Glaſton, half ſpitefully.

"Why, not much, I muſt confeſs.—Thoſe who have ſenſe and good nature will not judge hardly of me—and for others who have neither why ſhould I diſturb myſelf?"

"Well, you know beſt, Miſs Dacres. I'm ſure I'd no motive myſelf but friendſhip in ſaying any thing at all about it—though, when I came down here,

here, all the world began open-mouthed upon me. But pray," added ſhe, looking ſignificantly, "pray what is become of young Marchmont?"

"What is *become* of him?—He is abroad."

"Lord!" rejoined Mrs. Glaſton, "what a number of lies *was* told about him! My brother inſiſted upon making us believe that he was gone to Ireland as a ſteward to ſome man of fortune; but there was people that knew better."

Althea, who imagined this related to his concealment at Eaſtwoodleigh, and who had not courage to enquire how far that circumſtance had been known and talked of, now bluſhed deeper than before; but, deſirous of turning the diſcourſe, ſaid drily, "I cannot imagine how it ſhould intereſt any body, unleſs indeed thoſe who, like Mr. Everſley your brother, were generous enough to try to do him good."

"Oh!

"Oh! the world will talk, you know, my dear—but, come, tell me how long do you intend to ſtay here? Do you ever go to the Rooms? It is not true, is it, that you are partner in the Marchmonts' ſhop? You'll go back to Lady Dacres in the winter, to be ſure?"

Of theſe queſtions Althea, very weary and impatient, anſwered only two.—"I never go to the Rooms—I have, at preſent, no intention of returning to Lady Dacres."

"But, bleſs me, my dear!—what am I to ſay to the folks who aſk me queſtions about you? Do you know, I have been quite diſtreſſed ever ſince I came, with one and the other teaſing me ſo about you. Dear! I thought, to be ſure, what they ſaid was lies and invention from the beginning to the end.—But then Mrs. Higgenbottom, and her ſiſter Miſs Carraway, and Lady Buzzard, and her daughter Miſs Marianne, ſaid all of them, that, for their parts, they knew

it

it to be trew; and Lady Buzzard ſaid ſhe knew a lady who had bought a pair of fire-ſkreens here, which they knew were your doing."

"How theſe worthy people ſhould know that, I cannot imagine, nor is it indeed very material. For the reſt, you are not now, Mrs. Glaſton, to learn, that Mrs. Marchmont and her family, whom you ſo well knew formerly in a very different ſituation of life, *have* had recourſe to their own work to obtain an increaſe of income—an effort of virtue which, *I* think, is ſo far from debaſing them, that whoever *does* think ſo, and ſhould therefore ſlight and deſpiſe them, would ſink, in my opinion, into the loweſt contempt.——The goſſiping remarks of ſuch people I never deſire to hear: themſelves I never deſire to ſee."

This anſwer, ſo unlike the uſual gentleneſs of Althea, ſeemed equally to ſurpriſe and offend the perſon to whom

it

it was addreſſed, who, without aſking to ſee any of the Marchmont family, rang for her carriage, at the ſame moment that another drove up to the door.

The maid, having no orders to the contrary, uſhered into the room a lady whoſe face Althea did not recollect; while Mrs. Glaſton, without repeating the uſual leave-taking compliments, departed, and, driving to a milliner's, was ſoon ſo entirely occupied and enchanted by the ſight of ſome moſt elegant new articles from London, that, for ſome time, her ſpleen againſt her old friend was forgotten.

Althea, in the mean time, having deſired her newly-arrived gueſt, and the gentleman who attended her, to ſit down, enquired whether ſhe wiſhed to ſpeak to Mrs. Marchmont. While Althea ſaid this, the puppy-looking animal who came with her taking out an opera-glaſs, looked at her a moment; then, turning

on

on his heel, hummed an Italian air, and went to the window. The lady was not ſo ſilent.

"So!" cried ſhe, "you have quite forgot me, I ſee?"

"I beg your pardon," anſwered Althea, who now remembered the voice and affected manner—"I believe I ſpeak to Mrs. Polwarth."

"Juſt ſo.—Well! I am glad you remember me: you muſt know I hate vaſtly to be forgot. Though I ſhould not have pardoned even the ſuſpicion of it, if you had not ſeen me among *ſuch* a ſet at that horrible old houſe of Sir Audley's, where my cariſſimo ſpoſo uſed to drag me once a year to mortify with that moſt irkſome of all twaddlers, Lady Dacres. Wardy, don't you remember you were there with me once, and helped me to hoax the whole ſet? and a precious ſet they were. 'Tis partly my deteſtation of them, and knowing

ing how I hated them myſelf, that, add
to my amazing good-nature, and my lib
ral opinions, that makes me your cha
pion; and I declare every where in t
ſcrewed-up faces of a legion of tabbi
that you have done vaſtly right in plea
ing yourſelf, and that I dote upon yo
ſpirit and reſolution—for that I ha
always done as I pleaſed myſelf, a
always intend it."

Althea not at all gueſſing to what pu
poſe all this tended, and indeed b
lieving it meant nothing, made no
ply.

The ſlender beau, in his pantaloo
reaching to his heels, and ſomethi
like an old great coat on his ſhoulde
ſtood drumming againſt the windo
and lent no aſſiſtance to the conver
tion.

"I ſuppoſe," reſumed the Lady, "t
all the world (that is, all of the wo
that have any ſenſe) think juſt as I
thou

though not half of them have the courage to avow it. Who would ſtay with ſuch a tedious ſelfiſh biddy as Lady Dacres? Oh! I have fought fifty battles about you."

Althea, very ſorry to have become the ſubject of converſation, and not at all ambitious of ſuch an advocate, did not look very grateful.

"But come," cried the Lady, "come! let us look, *ma petite amie*, at ſome of the pretty nick-nacks that I hear you and Co. make for ſale. I intend that Wardy ſhall make me a preſent of ſomething."

"There is, I believe," anſwered Althea coldly, "nothing at all worth producing for ſuch a purpoſe; but if there were, Mrs. Marchmont is not at home, and in her abſence I have no authority to diſpoſe of, or even to ſhew, the work."

"Well! never mind then; I'll make the wretch go with me ſomewhere elſe. But à-propos, Miſs Dacres, I want vaſtly to

to hear *your* account of theſe friends of yours, theſe Marchmonts, that I have heard ſo much about. Here is my card —pray call upon me ſome morning: I ſhall be very glad to ſee you—you'll make no ceremony—I am not like any mortal elſe you know on this earth, and delight in, adore all ſort of eccentricity, and to make honeſt matter-of-fact folks ſtare! If there was any thing I could poſſibly deviſe to cauſe thoſe ſtupid boors to open their round owl's eyes wider upon me than they do already, I ſhould certainly ſport it."

"As my ambition, Madam," ſaid Althea, ſtill more drily, "is not of the ſame ſoaring ſort, I merely wiſh to know what part of my conduct it can poſſibly be that has given riſe to the malignity, againſt which you have been at ſo much generous pains to defend me——malignity, which ſeems to have been indulged by people among whom I am hardly known even by name."

"Oh!

"Oh! my charming girl! never apply to me for ſuch a hiſtory—rather go aſk the old fadges who, perhaps, invented half of it. I dare ſay there is not an ancient maiden, either native or foreigner, of this place, nor for ten miles round, who would not be delighted to tell it to your face with emendations and additions: but, for myſelf, I aſſure you that I am the beſt-natured creature in the world; therefore I'll tell you nothing of what I hear, only what I ſee with my own eyes, which is—You are vaſtly handſomer than you uſed to be. I don't wonder, indeed, that Lady Prim, your mother-in-law, uſed you as ſhe did to get rid of you."

"I have nothing to complain of, Madam, in regard to Lady Dacres," ſaid Althea.

"That muſt be owing to your patience, I am ſure, rather than to any good in her—a naſty, ill-natured, ſpiteful old puſs! I wiſh with all my ſoul ſhe may

may marry her butler.—Well, but ſince you won't tell me how you came to muſter reſolution enough to act for yourſelf, I'll go now, and come another day. I'm in a horrible hurry, and that faithleſs fellow looks as if he longed to leave me to go to my appointment alone.—Come, you animal," added ſhe, riſing and taking Wardour (who was ſtill her attendant) by the arm, "let us go."

They then got into the carriage that was waiting, and departed together—to the great relief of Althea, who returned not, however, to the tranquillity ſhe had enjoyed before.

The ſtrange and unpleaſant circumſtance of having become the converſation of a place where ſhe thought herſelf hardly known, the motives which were imputed to her for her reſidence with Mrs. Marchmont, the certainty that her attachment to the ſon of the family was ſuſpected, if not actually known—all ſerved to fill her with grief and vexation:

tion: ſhe thought that ſuch reports could have come only from Lady Dacres; and though the conſciouſneſs of the purity of her mind, and the innocence and propriety of her conduct, ſoon gave her ſelf-ſatisfaction enough to enable her to riſe above theſe vague and idle rumours, yet nothing could be more diſtreſſing than the certainty of Lady Dacres's malignity towards her, which could hardly fail of being productive of ſo many inconveniences both to her fortune and reputation: and theſe injuries coming from the very hand that ought to have been held forth offering friendſhip and protection, ſeemed doubly cruel, and very difficult calmly to endure.

It gave her alſo great pain to reflect, that when all theſe reports became known to Mrs. Marchmont, which ſhe knew muſt ſoon happen, the comfort and pleaſure they had found in being together would be empoiſoned, and that ſhe

ſhe ſhould be the cauſe of giving uneaſineſs to the perſons ſhe moſt loved and eſteemed.

Alas! there were but too many cauſes of concern already. Mrs. Marchmont, in a continual ſtruggle between her dread of the future and the uncertainty how ſhe ought to act at preſent, delayed from time to time the deciſion which alone could have rendered her propoſed plan eligible. This delay ſhe imputed to the neceſſity of waiting for letters from her ſon; but it was partly owing to the lingering remains of that reluctant pride which often returned to the charge, even when ſhe thought her fortitude and her reaſon had conquered it for ever. The queſtion continually recurred to the mother's heart: Ought ſhe, for the ſake of a trifling pecuniary advantage, to humble her daughters' proſpects in life? Who would marry girls from a ſhop?—To this Reaſon conſtantly replied,

plied, that the man who happening to prefer one of them, ſhould on that account reject her, muſt be a poor-ſpirited creature, with whom it was unlikely ſhe would be happy.

Her health, however, gradually declined in the conteſt; and ſhe inſenſibly to herſelf, yet viſibly to others, loſt the advantage ſhe at firſt ſeemed to derive from ſea air, and from having quitted the neighbourhood of London.

Althea was already diſguſted with a plan which expoſed her to the repetition of ſuch impertinence as ſhe had lately been teaſed with; and dreading leſt, in the month of October now at hand, Lady Dacres ſhould refuſe to pay even the intereſt of Mrs. Trevyllian's legacy, ſhe ſunk in deſpite of her own reſolution, and the buoyant ſpirits of the happy-tempered Lucy, into frequent fits of deſpondence; without, however, avowing even to herſelf, what ſhe felt to be

true, that the long ſilence of Marchmont, the uncertainty of what was the ſituation of the place where he was ſuppoſed to be, and the deep concern that ſometimes on his account ſeemed to bow the ſpirit of his mother to the earth, had more influence in impreſſing pain on her heart, than any thing that related to herſelf or her ſituation.

To remain with his mother, however, ſo long as ſhe had the means of making it an object of ſome advantage, was her ſteady reſolution; and in avoiding every one likely to repeat what ſhe had already heard with ſo much uneaſineſs, in ſoothing and ſweetening ſome of the very bitter hours Mrs. Marchmont paſſed in ſilent ſolicitude, another fortnight paſſed.

At the end of that time Mrs. Marchmont was one day ſurpriſed by a letter, encloſing from a woman of high rank a Bank note of a hundred pounds. Inſtead

ſtead of that *gratiouſneſs* which often embitters ſuch gifts, the letter explaining from whom it came was couched in terms ſo delicate, ſo truly good, that Mrs. Marchmont for once received an obligation without feeling herſelf humbled by it. The almoſt immediate conſequence was, a reſolution, in which her daughters and Althea warmly concurred, to remove from a public place, relinquiſh their plan for the preſent, and wait for news from Marchmont in a cottage at a village in Kent, which preciſely at that time happened to be vacant.—Thither they immediately were ſettled, and there paſſed part of the month of October. The whole of November, and midwinter arrived, without their being ſenſible of any wiſh for a change, and without any new uneaſineſs, ſave only from the now very long ſilence of Marchmont. Althea had received her ſmall dividend in due courſe, and from ſome unaccountable effort of generoſity

Lady

Lady Dacres had ſent an additional thirty pounds — but without ſaying on what account, or writing a line of any kind in the blank cover in which it was encloſed.

7 JU 52

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.